Guitar & Bass MAY 2014

ANDY SUMMERS INTERVIEW

Guitar & Bass

MAY 2014 Vol 25 No 08 £4.25
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The Gibson Les Paul Reborn

The first great reissue: how the Heritage 80 Series rescued the legacy of the 'burst

Godin and Lakewood reviews

PLUS!

Fano

Zakk Wylde

Rotosound

Glenn Tilbrook

Cornish Cream

Droolsome Private Collection from the deep South West

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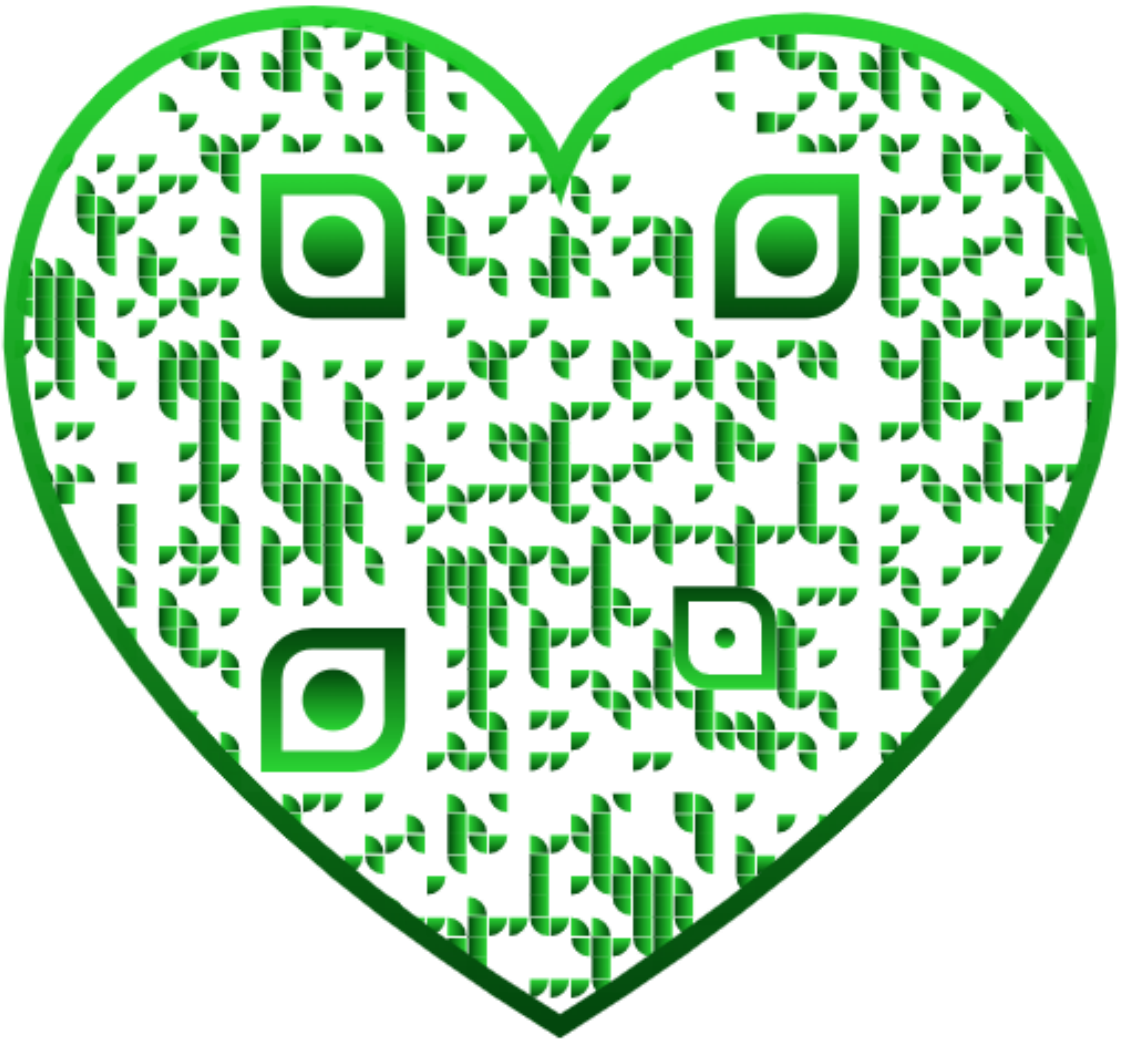
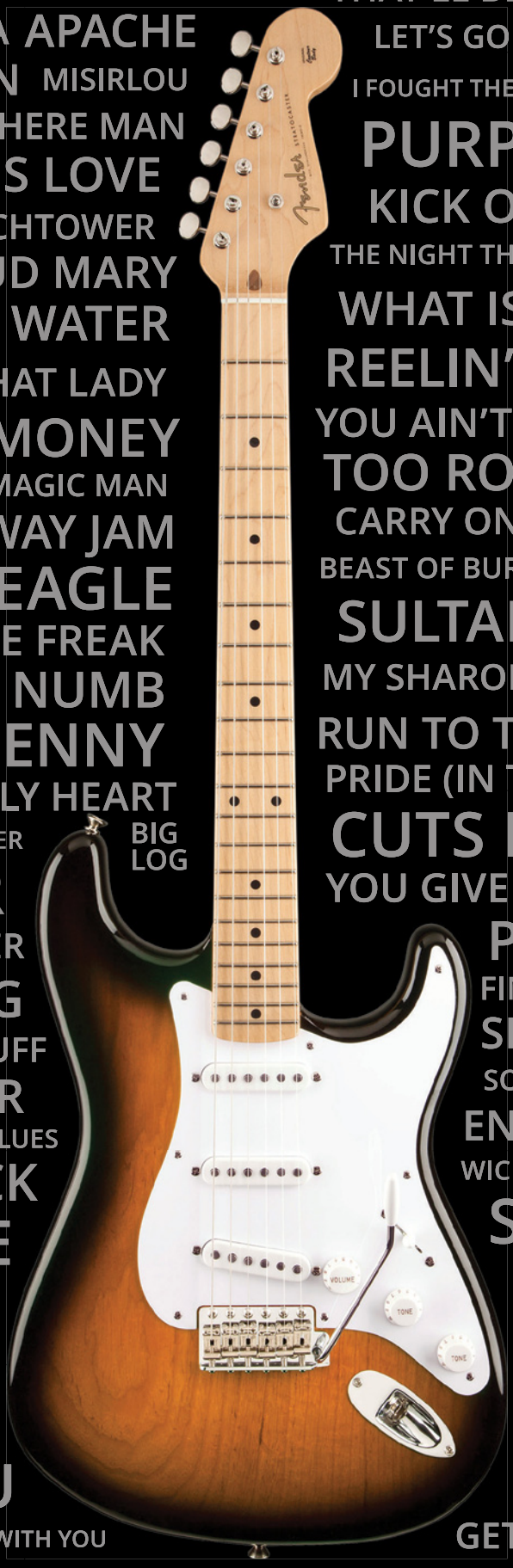
Vol 25 No 08
Anthem Publishing



CADILLAC IN MODEL "A" THE WORLD IS YOURS THAT'LL BE THE DAY PEGGY SUE
BABY BLUE LA BAMBA APACHE
LET'S GO TRIPPIN' TRICK BAG
WALK, DON'T RUN MISIRLOU
I FOUGHT THE LAW SURFIN' U.S.A.
HELP ME RHONDA NOWHERE MAN
PURPLE HAZE FIRE
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE
KICK OUT THE JAMS F.B.I.
ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
THE NIGHT THEY DROVE OLD DIXIE DOWN
BELL BOTTOM BLUES PROUD MARY
WHAT IS LIFE LAYLA
SMOKE ON THE WATER
REELIN' IN THE YEARS
SUPERFLY THAT LADY
YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET
SWEET HOME ALABAMA MONEY
TOO ROLLING STONED
DIXIE CHICKEN MAGIC MAN
CARRY ON MY WAYWARD SON
WALK THIS WAY FREEWAY JAM
BEAST OF BURDEN BAD PENNY
FLY LIKE AN EAGLE
SULTANS OF SWING
WONDERFUL TONIGHT LE FREAK
MY SHARONA LIMELIGHT
COMFORTABLY NUMB
RUN TO THE HILLS MANEATER
ELEPHANT TALK LENNY
PRIDE (IN THE NAME OF LOVE)
OWNER OF A LONELY HEART
CUTS LIKE A KNIFE
ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER BIG LOG
YOU GIVE LOVE A BAD NAME
BLACK STAR
PRIDE AND JOY
SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER
FINISH WHAT YA STARTED
SLOW TURNING
SEE A LITTLE LIGHT
SMOKING GUN TUFF ENUFF
SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT
CLIFFS OF DOVER
ENDLESS, NAMELESS
DAMN RIGHT I'VE GOT THE BLUES
WICKED GAME COMEDOWN
BLUE ON BLACK
SWALLOWED
SCAR TISSUE
ALIVE NO RAIN
BULLET WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS
SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE
DAMMIT LAST NITE
MAPS GRAVITY
DIVINIATIONS ABEL
I BET YOU LOOK GOOD ON THE DANCEFLOOR
'TIL SUMMER COMES AROUND
FORGET YOU
BEVERLY HILLS
WHO WOULDN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU
GET LUCKY BLACK CHANDELIER

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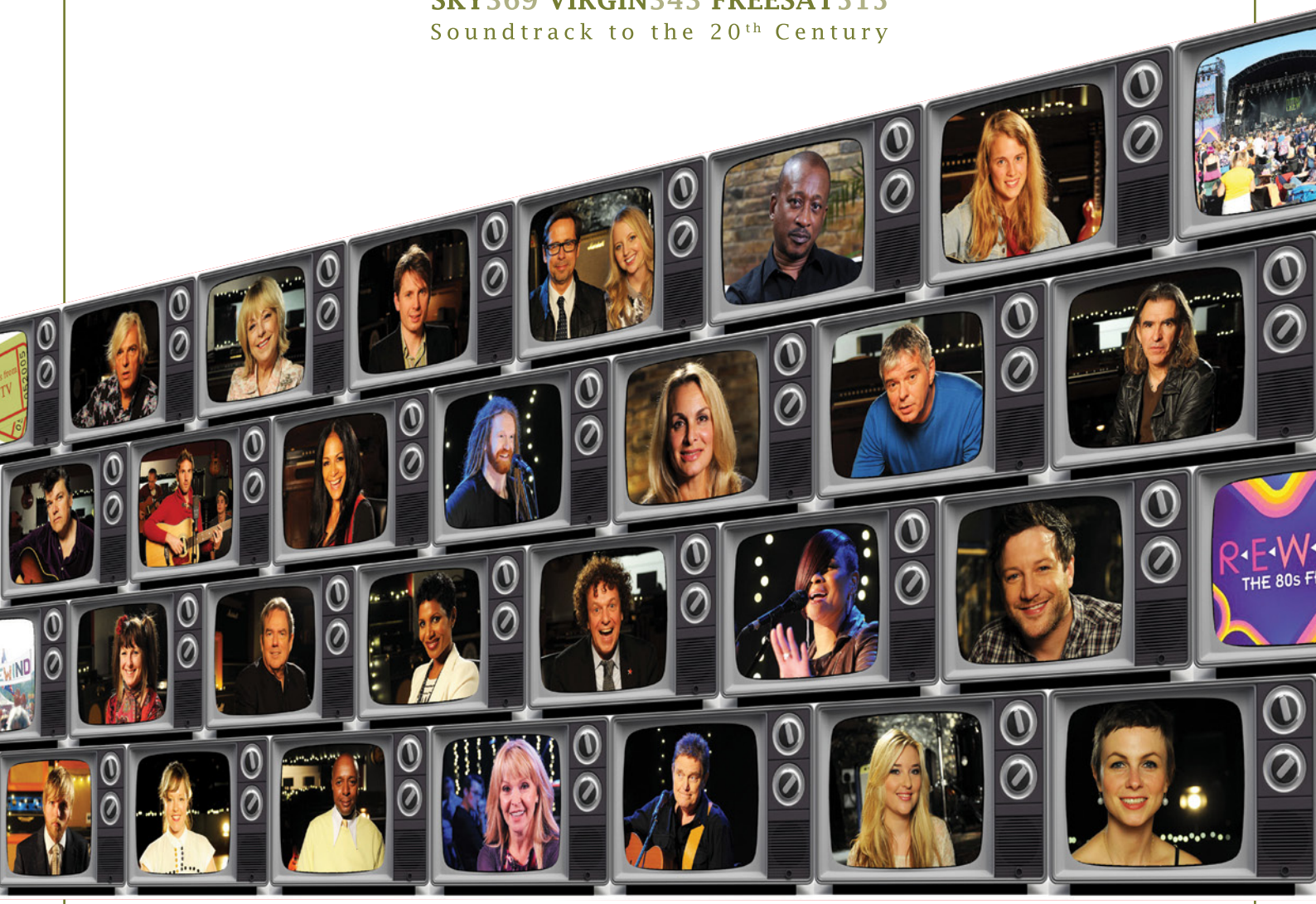
Soundtrack to the 20th Century



Every one of our esteemed guests is much more than 'just another brick in the wall...'

Vintage TV – it's all about the music

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Neil McCormick, The Telegraph music critic

www.vintage.tv

Guitar & Bass

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History in the making...

Nowadays it's no surprise to see companies looking back to yesteryear for both reissues and new models, but this wasn't always the case. The story of the Gibson Les Paul Heritage series is a fascinating one. Gibson successfully set out to recreate the glories of its classic era whilst delivering a contemporary slant on proceedings, and although there weren't many of the guitars made, the Heritage series went on to influence Gibson and any number of other companies in terms of the potency of reissues and the importance of gaining inspiration from the exploits of the past.

And gear-lovers of all kinds should be thumbing our reviews section this month to peruse the possibilities of new equipment from the likes of Godin, Hayden, and Lakewood (to name but three) being added to your collection.

In our vintage section this month, we've got Sid Bishop and Phil Harris in top form, as well as a sterling *Private Collection*. Also, given that it's now British Summer Time here in Blighty (you can make your own jokes about the state of the weather) it's the perfect time to get yourself in axe-ready shape with our article on how to get guitar-fit. We wish you success in all your guitar-related endeavours and we hope you enjoy the issue...

John

In this issue

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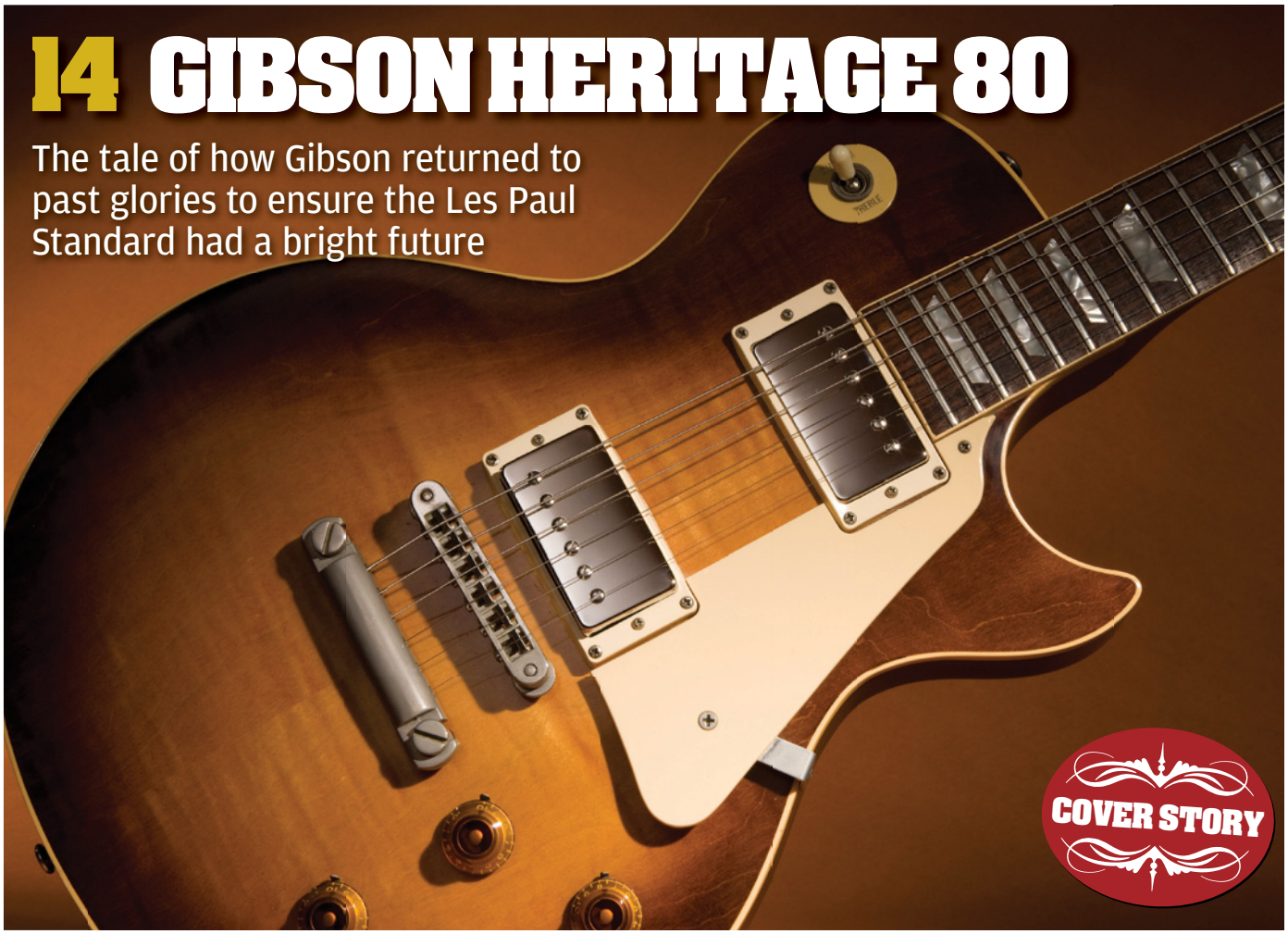

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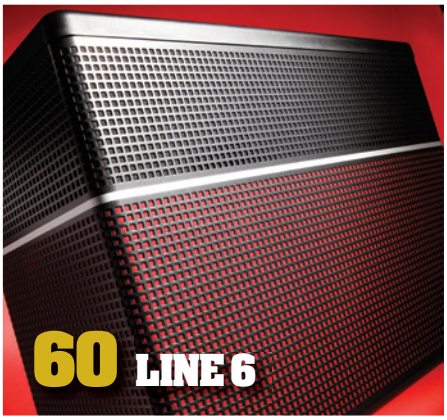

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A rugged gigworthy bass cab from the UK

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Reverberations

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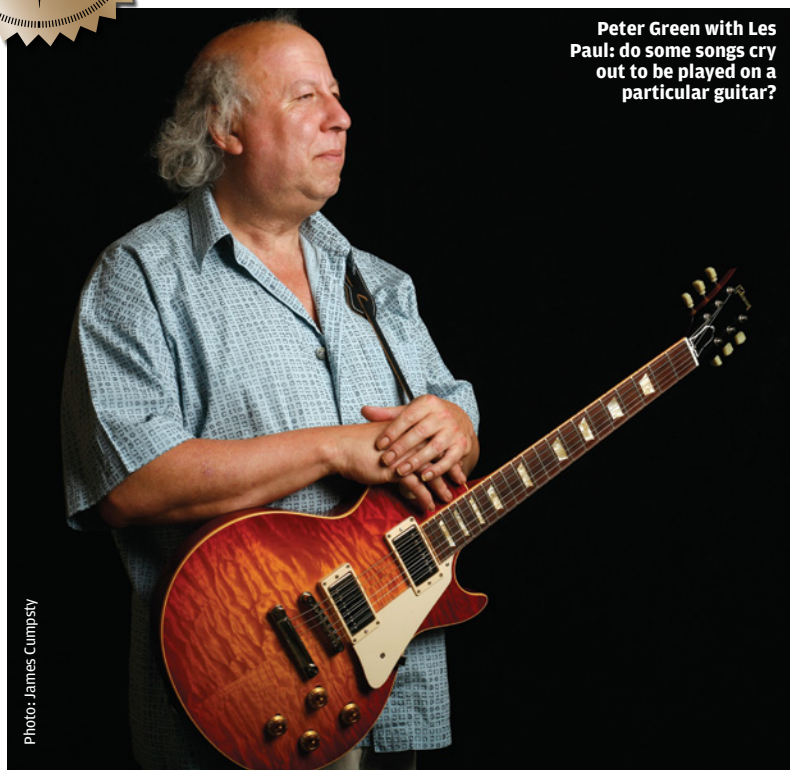
Please note, we reserve the right to edit where we feel it is appropriate, or to print extracts from longer correspondences

STAR LETTER

IN THE EAR OF THE BEHOLDER



Peter Green with Les Paul: do some songs cry out to be played on a particular guitar?

Photo: James Cumpsty

Simon Dunleavy's letter in *G&B* April 2014, regarding his Strat 'inflexibility', stirred the little grey cells. At our trio's latest pub gig there was (and for how many *G&B* readers does this ring a bell?) insufficient space to put up two stands to accommodate my main and spare guitars. Bandmates asked why I needed two guitars; the obvious answer is that one is my principal instrument and the other is a standby in case of string breakage or worse.

But this simple explanation falls far short of the reality. Almost invariably I will take a twin-humbucker guitar and a triple single-coil, vibrato-equipped instrument. The choice of two different archetypes suggests something beyond the main-and-spare explanation. Each has its own array of sounds, but the choice of instrument also influences one's attitude as to how the guitar is approached and played. It just seems – and feels both physically and mentally – wrong to play SRV licks or an old warhorse such as *Smoke On The Water* on anything but a Strat. Similarly Peter Green's version of *Black Magic Woman* really begs for a Les Paul or, failing that, a guitar fitted with a pair of humbuckers.

It is not just trying to emulate – or at least allude to – distinctive sounds; it has a lot to do with the feel of the guitar and the frame of mind that it stimulates. I have discussed this with a few other players and some are inclined to agree with my view; others think it's total eye-wash. I wonder what *G&B* readers take on this may be?

Richard Underwood *via email*

Rosetti

Written a Star Letter? Contact Rosetti on 01376 550033 to claim your Rickenbacker goodie bag

G&B **We'll happily back you up against anyone who disagrees with you. Different guitars give you different possibilities, for sure. Some of it is down to the guitar's inherent feel and sonic qualities; some of it is down to your own knowledge and opinions about music and guitar history. You mention *Black Magic Woman*, a track that both Peter Green and Santana have made their own over the years. Now if you want to recreate the vibe it makes perfect sense to play the same guitars as them in the same way. But what if you just heard one of their songs and had no idea what guitar they were using, and you learned to play their version of the song on a completely different type of guitar? Would that be automatically invalid? It's certainly a fascinating subject, and we join Richard in asking other *G&B* readers to give us their thoughts on the subject...**

JUST SHY OF THE MARK

I read with interest Ben Houseman's letter in the April issue on 'shy' guitar players being under-appreciated. However, I've never been able to truly understand guitar players who look really uncomfortable when they are playing (assuming they are not struggling technically to play the right notes in the right order). As a criminally shy teenager who blushed when pretty much anyone talked to them, learning to play the guitar was a godsend. It wasn't just about gaining confidence with girls – it was about gaining confidence with everything. Getting on any kind of stage with a guitar in my hands seemed a kind of release, and as long as I wasn't making any mistakes, I couldn't

Ted Nugent: no wallflower

help but get into the music I was playing and enjoy the whole experience. I'm not saying I was a rock god (I'm sure I looked like a fool to plenty of people) but the important thing was that I didn't feel like a fool – and that feeling was worth its weight in gold.

So I truly can't work out why professional-level guitar players who know the songs and are playing in front of a sympathetic audience can look really embarrassed. I'm not saying everyone has to act like Ted Nugent, but if it's that much of a trial for you, surely you're playing the wrong instrument... or are in the wrong profession?

Richard Berry *via email*

G&B **We take your points, Richard, and we're glad to hear how guitar playing changed your life. We've all seen guitar players look embarrassed onstage, but it can be for a number of valid reasons. Maybe it's the antics of another band member that's causing them mental anguish (we've all been there). We've talked to several guitarists who admit that, even when they're enjoying the gig, they appear to look as if they'd rather be anywhere else than onstage. Of course it would be great if more players had stage charisma, and the same goes for all musicians who play live, but we'd be loathe to dig out a fellow guitar player just because they look a bit nervous.**

EB AND FLOW

Just looking at the review of the new Gibson EB Bass in the April issue, which looks great as it is. However, it's left me wondering whether we will see a guitar version. While the inspirations for the bass itself could be RD bottom and Precision top, we're left with something that definitely looks 'Mosrite'. Twin P90s and an LP Junior bridge (or even a single P90 version) would surely be a winner. It's a Gibbo 'pawn shop special' that never was! Time to play Fender at their own game?

Matt Fisher *via email*

G&B **Gibson aren't generally ones for dishing out the goods ahead of time, so we truly don't know whether the cool guitar you describe is in the planning stage. However, your suggestions certainly get our vote, and we hope Gibson takes the hint – if they're not thinking along those lines already.**

Ineffective tone controls: how can it still happen?

POINTLESS KNOBS

So the Gretsch G5620T-CB has tone knobs that don't function. I own a Blacktop Jazzmaster with the same problem – nothing happens between 10 and 1, and everything happens between 1 and 0. When you reviewed Blacktop Jaguars, they had the same problem. Both Fender and Gretsch have been making electric guitars for over 60 years, so how hard can it be for them to make tone knobs that work? These are mid-priced guitars so they should work properly without needing to be fixed at the time they are bought. What is going on?

Shane O'Neill *via email*

LEGENDARY MUSIC STRINGS
SINCE 1958

Photo: Ed Miles

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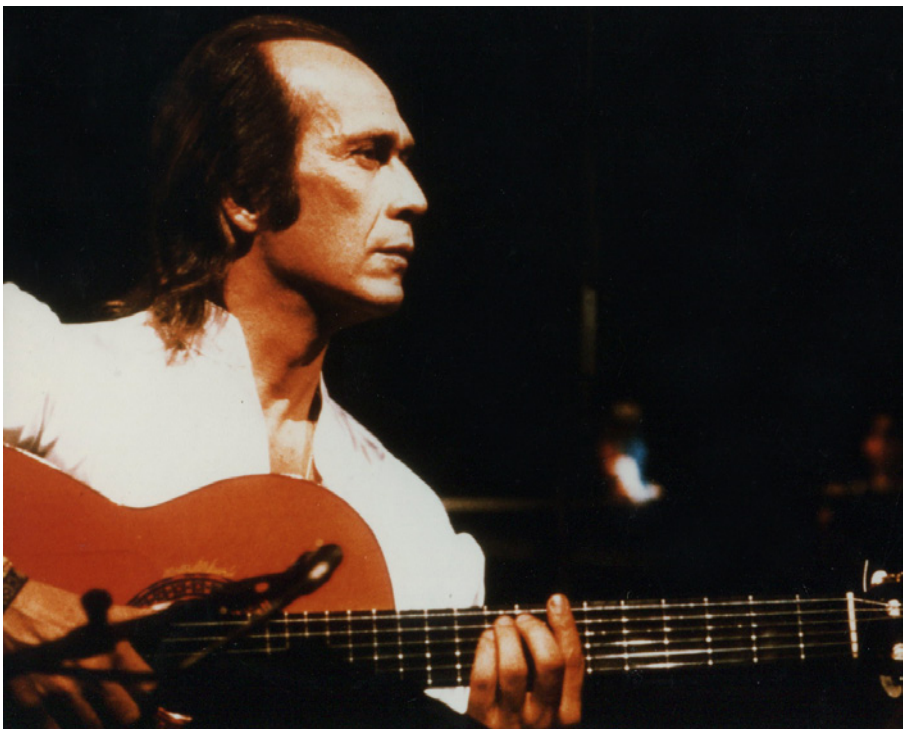
Woke up this mornin'... NEWS



Paco De Lucia 1947-2014

The man who brought flamenco to the world and shaped it for the modern era has died aged just 66 from a suspected heart attack

Born Francisco Gustavo Sánchez Gomes in Cádiz near Gibraltar in Southern Spain, the boy that grew up to be Paco De Lucia became an infant prodigy, adopting his Portuguese mother's maiden name and turning professional when he was just 12 years old.

He toured with the company of famed flamenco dancer José Greco from the age of 14 but soon developed a taste for pushing his chosen form beyond its traditional boundaries. By 1967 he had joined forces with singer Camarón de la Isla and the pair eventually made a total of 10 albums which did much to bring the term New (or Nuevo) Flamenco into common parlance.

His ninth studio album, 1973's *Fuente Y Caudal,* is credited with changing flamenco forever and contained the tune that has become his signature, *Entre Dos Aguas*. His 1976 release *Almoraima* saw him begin in earnest to incorporate jazz and Arabic scales, which soon caught the interest of fellow guitar pioneers John McLaughlin and Larry Coryell. The three formed the Guitar Trio in 1979 and toured Europe, culminating in the release of a video of the Trio's performance at the Royal Albert Hall dubbed *Meeting Of The Spirits*. In 1981 Al Di Meola replaced Coryell and this line-up made a live record of such virtuosity that it has set the standard for instrumental guitar works ever since. *Friday Night In San Francisco* sold over a million copies and carried both flamenco and Paco into the mainstream; its impact can still be felt with such events as Joe Satriani's G3 tours.

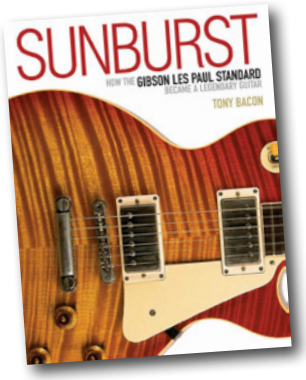
De Lucia continued to innovate. He recorded projects with pianist Chick Corea and many more with Di Meola and McLaughlin, always pushing for new horizons, but by 2004, tired of the constant touring, he began to wind down his workload. Dubbed 'Spain's greatest export' and 'the Andrés Segovia of flamenco', Paco De Lucia was the player who breathed new life into an ancient genre and assured its future as a living, progressive form. It's unlikely his legacy will ever fade.

Elixir & Taylor Team Up

The new Elixir HD Light strings are the result of a collaboration with Taylor Guitars. Master luthier Andy Powers' aim was to create a custom string set for his employer's newly-redesigned Grand Concert and Grand Auditorium instruments. They're both sure the new set – .013, .017, .025, .032, .042 and .053. – brings a bolder, stronger high end and fuller, warmer low end for any narrow-body style acoustic, Taylor or otherwise. See www.gore.com for the scientific string facts.

'BURST HEAVEN

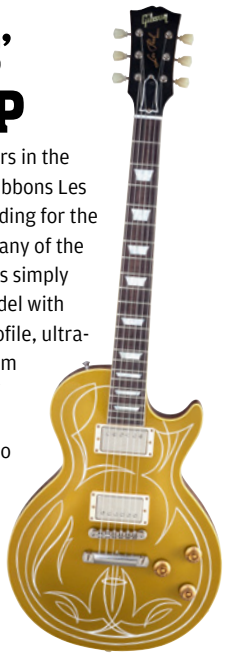
Backbeat's informative guitar tomes have been a blessing over the years, and *Sunburst: How The Gibson Les Paul Standard Became A Legendary Guitar* by Tony Bacon is sure to continue the tradition. The history of the 'burst from its conception through to the present day is conveyed meticulously, and we also get the stories behind the individual guitars of players such as Clapton, Page, Kossoff and Billy Gibbons. All the info you could ever need is packed in, including a guide detailing how to identify any Gibson LP Standard style guitar from collectables to reissues. See www.backbeatbooks.com.



One Stop Boss

The GP-10 (£415) combines the vast array of amp and pedal sounds of the Boss flagship GT-100 modelling multi-FX with the GK guitar synth possibilities of the GR-55; just add an instrument with a compatible pickup and discover instant tuning changes and general MIDI mayhem. All that processing power is rammed into a compact box, and extra functionality is added too; the only problem is getting your head around just how much this little unit can do. Visit www.roland.com.

GIBBONS' GOLD TOP



It's been a couple of years in the making but the Billy F Gibbons Les Paul Goldtop is now heading for the shops. It's not a copy of any of the Rev's specific guitars, it's simply a take on a late '50s model with Billy's favoured neck profile, ultra-light construction, custom electronics and a pair of Seymour Duncan Pearly Gates pickups. There's no selector switch and only one master tone to allow you to dial in tonal nuances on the fly. There will be only 300 made in total; all will feature Billy's own special 'pinstripe' design on the top, and half will be hand-aged complete with Texas-shaped buckle-rash on the back. Pop over to www.gibson.com for more details.

Walter Trout Battles Liver Disease

Legendary blues rocker Walter Trout is seriously ill with a liver condition. He had lost 100lbs in weight over a year, but as he was stoically soldiering on with his live schedule the gravity of his condition came to light only recently. When in March the doctors issued the news that Walter would need a liver transplant within 90 days in order to survive, his wife Marie launched a desperate online appeal to help raise funds for the operation. Such is the degree of love and respect for Walter around the world that the sum required, $125,000, was raised in only four days. Marie was humbled by the response: 'Walter and I are speechless. You have filled our hearts to the brim with your care and concern.' We at *G&B* most sincerely hope that Walter will soon be on the road to recovery. Our thoughts are with him.

NEWS IN BRIEF

T-Rex Keep 'Em Coming

After launching five new pedals at the NAMM show T-Rex are showering us with even more tempting possibilities. The Diva Drive is a Screamer-style box that allows blend between clean and overdriven signal, the Quint Drive is an octave pedal with fast polyphonic tracking, and the Karma Boost does exactly what it says on the tin up to the power of 16dB. You'll find more at www.t-rex-effects.com

Andertons Marshall Special

Andertons of Guildford in Surrey were early supporters of Marshall amps, and to celebrate the shop's 50th anniversary a series of 200 one-watt CSJTM145 models have been exclusively created to echo the very first JTM45s that Andertons sold back in 1964. The covering, 1960s style radio knobs, jewel power indicator and white 'lasermax' panel are all period-correct. Get over to www.andertons.co.uk to try and nab one

Rotosound Sealed & Delivered

Ever opened your emergency strings packet to find the blighters distinctly on the turn? Well, British string experts Rotosound have developed new air-tight foil packaging that will make such disasters history, and new red, white and blue coloured ball ends will remind you you've patriotically bought British too. See www.rotosound.com

Calendar SHOWS, GIGS, FESTIVALS, WORKSHOPS

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The Robert Cray Band

2-18 MAY

The king of soulful blues returns to promote his *In My Soul* album, with support from Azadeh

WHERE? **13 dates across the country**
TICKETS **From £29.50**
CONTACT **www.robertcray.com**

Download Festival

13-15 JUNE

The UK's biggest hard-rock festival stars Avenged Sevenfold, Trivium and Linkin Park as well as Aerosmith, Status Quo and Joe Bonamassa

WHERE? **Donington Park**
TICKETS **Weekend tickets from £180**
CONTACT **www.downloadfestival.co.uk**

Hebden Bridge Blues Festival

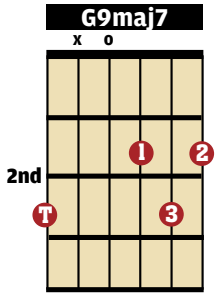
23-25 MAY

Award-winning event now in its fourth year boasts three stages with acts such as Russ Tippins, the Motives, Dave Arcari and the Mark Pontin Group

WHERE? **Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire**
TICKETS **Weekend £73.50, £30 more for camping Day tickets: Friday £16.50, Sat or Sun £32.50**
CONTACT **www.yorkshirebluesfestival.co.uk**

The Lost Chord

The sharp-eyed might spot that this is essentially a D suspended chord with a bassy G provided by your thumb instead of a treble G, but it's an interesting spin on the more common version and we think you'll find it dreamily addictive.



Album reviews

John McLaughlin & 4th Dimension

THE BOSTON RECORD

Abstract Logix

Fans of the Mahavishnu Orchestra will enjoy McLaughlin's return to a more boisterous fuzzed-up tone, as featured throughout this gig recorded at the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston during the band's 2013 tour. Bassist

Etienne Mbappe, keys man Ranjit Barot and long-term drummer Gary Husband assist a in a blistering, dynamic performance that will burn itself long into your memory.

Marc Ford

HOLY GHOST

Naim Edge

Whenever Ford is mentioned, his lead work with self-styled Stonesy '70s throwback rockers the Black Crowes often follows in the same breath. His solo work has indeed ploughed a similar, if mellower furrow, and the latest solo offering is a

gorgeous slice of melancholy Americana rich in exquisite country-folk twang and breezy, west coast ambience, with songs that rank amongst his finest yet.

David Grissom

HOW IT FEELS TO FLY

Blue Rose

Grissom is one of the most in-demand sidemen in Austin, Texas, with credits including John Mayall, Buddy Guy and Robben Ford. This solo effort contains eight self-penned tunes laid over a foundation of rocked-up AOR. His playing bites all

the way through – *Way Jose* is a gargantuan and very stylish guitar-fest – yet it's the four extra live cuts that really unleash his startling prowess to the full effect.

Black Label Society

CATACOMBS OF THE BLACK VATICAN

Provogue

The sinister title refers to ex-Ozzy Osbourne axeman Zakk Wylde's pet name for his home studio – which, in honour of the band he leads, is decorated wholly in black. Convincing, Sabbath-charged, muscular riffs and vicious leads ensue. Wylde can work a

melody too, and he's becoming one of the best in his field. The tender *Angel Of Mercy* and *Shades Of Grey* reveal a thoughtful composer behind all the brawn and bombast.

Pete Kennedy

TONE, TWANG AND TASTE

Self-released

A heartfelt tribute to the players who pioneered instrumental guitar music between 1930 and 1960, brilliantly rendered by a man lucky enough to have met and traded licks with many of those greats. Chet Atkins, Les Paul, Django Reinhardt, Charlie

Christian and Hank Garland are all honoured with superb technique and empathy; it's a labour of love that informs and entertains, and also shows off Kennedy's skills.

Two Wings

A WAKE

Tin Angel

Ex-Trembling Bells guitar man Ben Reynolds has combined his artful psyche-folk moves with ethereal vocalist Hanna Tuulikki, and the pair have conjured up a strange but magical brew that recalls Fairport Convention, Kate Bush and latter-era

Fleetwood Mac. Reynold's fluent lines steal the show even above Tuulikki's distinctive tones as celtic stomp meets soaring pop in a curious pastoral dreamscape.

Beth Hart & Joe Bonamassa

LIVE IN AMSTERDAM

Provogue

On the evidence of this twin CD the smouldering allure of Beth Hart's vocal cords may well be the perfect foil for the high-octane frettery that Bonamassa has taken to the outer limits. Cuts from the duo's two studio albums sit beside blues,

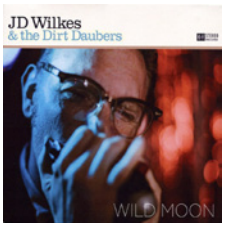
soul and jazz classics, all belted out with total and at times mesmerising conviction. For the full experience, the whole show is also available on DVD and Blu-Ray.

JD Wilkes & The Dirt Daubers

WILD MOON

Plowboy

JD Wilkes is a visual artist, author, 'honorary Kentucky Colonel' and harmonica player for artists such Merle Haggard and Hank Williams III. Fortunately for us he has also found time to take the raunchiest blues-drenched retro roadhouse



rock'n'roll, add a spiky punk edge and make a record that thrills to the bone. Mrs Jessica Wilkes shares vocals, and guitar man Rod Hamdallah drives home the groove.

Circa Zero

CIRCUS HERO

429

Police Telecaster king Andy Summers has found himself a new Sting in bassist/vocalist Rob Giles, and the resulting shimmering melodic prog-pop is an object lesson in how to craft music that sits in the mainstream but still finds space for a broad

sonic palette of inventive and eclectic six-string forays. It's hard to believe that Summers is 71, but there are plainly still plenty of new tunes in those fingers.

SNAP JUDGEMENTS

Colin Edwin & Lorenzo Feliciati

TWINSCAPES

Rarenoise

Two freewheeling bassists meet to explore soundscapes beyond the twilight zone. A whole new sonic universe beckons

Adam Sweet

SMALL TOWN THINKING

Neo

Young rootsy guitar slinging songsmith from Exeter who has a Steve Earle-esque way with a narrative. No slouch on those strings either; bring on the big city

Afghan Whigs

DO TO THE BEAST

Sub Pop

The return of these grunge era mavericks sees Greg Dulli and company rebooting grandiose savage soul atop dark orchestrated riffage in elegant style

Matt Andersen

WEIGHTLESS

True North

The award-winning blues guitar licks take a back seat to soul, country and gospel material, and though we miss his fretwork his voice carries the day

Shez Raja Collective

SOHO LIVE

33

Brit bassist Raja ropes in the cream of the UK jazz scene to party hard. A thrilling mix of indo-jazz, thumping funk and vibey fusion

Dan Sartain

DUDESBLOOD

One Little Indian

A bizarre but infectious scattergun jumble of country noir, boisterous anarcho punk and vibrant, off-kilter garage rock from the ever-engaging Sartain

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND

IN MY SOUL OUT NOW

Legendary guitar musician and singer-songwriter Robert Cray returns with an outstanding collection of Stax and Chess influenced soul and blues. Produced by Steve Jordan

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08/05/14	Harrogate, UK, Royal Hall
09/05/14	Gateshead, UK, The Sage
10/05/14	Cambridge, UK, Corn Exchange
11/05/14	Norwich, UK, Theatre Royal
13/05/14	Tunbridge Wells, UK, Assembly Hall Theatre
14/05/14	Cardiff, UK, St Davids Hall
16/05/14	Manchester, UK, Bridgewater Hall
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BACK TO *the Future*

Gibson rediscovered its Les Paul Standard mojo with the Heritage 80 series, forerunners of the reissues you see today. Michael Stephens investigates the story of what some believe is a new vintage classic

Even a casual Gibson-watcher will know of key years in the history of the legendary Les Paul model. 1952 was the debut of the Les Paul Model (aka the Goldtop). 1958-'60 were the years of the fabled sunburst Standards, now widely considered the most valuable electric guitars ever made. Later, 1960 to '68, was when the double-cut SG (Solid Guitar) replaced – inexplicably, looking back – the single-cut design. And 1968 was when single-cuts returned. But what's significant about 1980? Gibson Les Paul aficionados will understand. 1980 was the year Gibson's Les Paul got its mojo back. Indeed, it's arguable that 1980 is as significant to 'ordinary' Les Paul fans as those earlier years are to super-rich vintage collectors and drowning-in-dollars rockstars. And the rebirth of 'proper' Gibson Les Pauls started with the Heritage 80 Series. ↔

Sucking in the ’70s?

In terms of hero-visibility, the 1970s was a huge decade for the Gibson Les Paul. The Who’s Pete Townshend, Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page, and the Stones’ Keith Richards were three iconic users. Mick Ronson (with David Bowie), Thin Lizzy (a classic dual-Les Paul band), Lynyrd Skynyrd, Genesis’s Steve Hackett, Kiss’s Ace Frehley, ZZ Top’s Billy F Gibbons and many more kept a Les Paul at the top of ‘want!’ lists. Gibson’s problem, if there was one, was that the Les Pauls used by these guitar heroes were not models you could buy off the shelf in the 1970s.

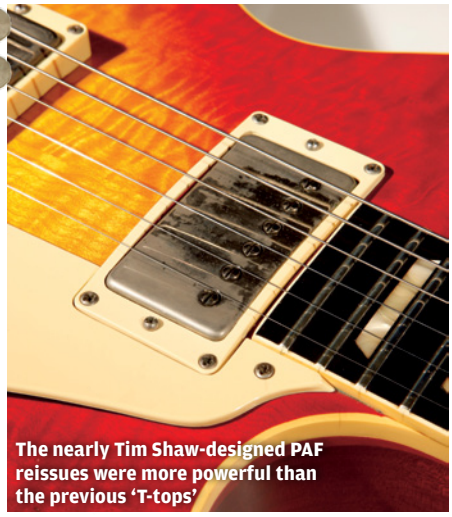
Gibson’s guitar makers had their own business dealings to confront. In 1969 – a year after the classic single-cut Les Paul was reintroduced – the company was bought by Norlin, a newly-named offshoot of Ecuadorian Company Ltd (ECL) who had bought a controlling interest in Chicago Musical Instruments (CMI) who then-owned Gibson. The politics of Gibson business is a side-story, albeit a fascinating one. The main challenge was making new Les Pauls that appealed to the key fans.

The year 1968 had seen the re-introduction of the single-cut Les Paul design, as a Custom and a Goldtop (which Gibson called a Standard, but bore little resemblance to the ’bursts of the previous decade.)

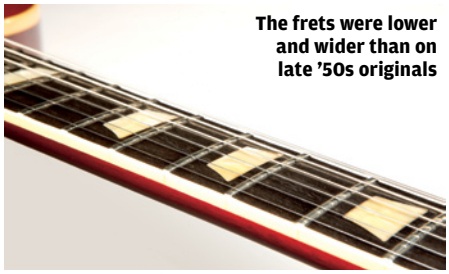
Guitar historian and Nashville dealer George Gruhn tells *Guitar & Bass*, ‘It was obvious that players wanted a good reissue of a 1959 Sunburst Les Paul far sooner than Gibson reacted to the demand. R&B players wanted a guitar like Mike Bloomfield’s ’burst before Gibson reissued Les Pauls in 1968. But when the company introduced the Les Paul Standard Goldtop with P90 pickups and the Les Paul Custom with “Fretless Wonder” frets in 1968 they were working with Les Paul rather than R&B and rock players. It appears Gibson were simply oblivious to the majority of their customers’ desires.’

An outspoken opinion from the respected George Gruhn, but the ’68s were actually quite successful. Gibson were soon building 100 Les Pauls a day to meet demand. Les Paul expert and *Guitar & Bass* contributor Phil Harris says ’68 LPs are really good.

Made in Nashville from 1980-’82, the Heritage 80 Les Pauls had closer-to-vintage specs with decent pickups and one-piece mahogany bodies. On the left is the Standard and right is the Elite model



The nearly Tim Shaw-designed PAF reissues were more powerful than the previous ‘T-tops’



The frets were lower and wider than on late ’50s originals

‘A ’68 Goldtop – even if refinished as a ’burst with PAFs added, like one of mine – was the best you could get,’ says Harris. ‘They’re fantastic guitars. The neck, the carved top: all are very close to a ’50s sunburst.’

In the ’70s, Gibson under Norlin pushed ahead Les Pauls with more dramatic changes. There was a new neck volute in 1970 (and confusing serial numbers, which annoyed collectors), a 1974 stab at reintroducing sunburst Les Paul Standards, and a so-called ‘pancake’ body of mahogany/maple/mahogany.

There was ’75’s new factory in Nashville alongside Kalamazoo (this was actually good), but also the ’76 change to maple necks (not always so good) and so on. But the likes of Gibson’s new Les Paul-alike L-6S, S-1, Sonex and Marauder models didn’t sell in huge numbers. Even Les Paul’s own Studio and Recording models couldn’t help. Les Paul’s own designs were focussed on moving recording capability forward. The legendary

TIMELINE
Gibson Heritage

1968
Gibson reintroduce the single cutaway Les Paul. But the ’68 ‘Standard’ is not like a ’burst... it’s a Goldtop with P90 pickups

1974
Gibson introduce another Les Paul Standard, but its primary tobacco burst is not close to a ’59. The sunburst Custom 20th Anniversary is closer, but still not faithful to ’50s sunbursts

1978-1979
‘The Les Paul’ model looks like a mongrel Custom. The 1979 Artist model adds extra switches for brightness, expansion and compression. 1979’s KM is nearer to a ‘proper’ ’burst reissue

Most important of all was a well-dished figured maple top with a centre-seam. The example pictured on this page is an Elite version

Two decades on, it was clear that there was demand for a Les Paul more faithful to the Standards of the late '50s

Les was a sonic genius, but he wasn't a marketing man – as George Gruhn says. With some '70s Les Pauls, it seems that Gibson were chasing down a blind alley.

All this time, classic '58-'60 sunbursts were starting to trade for big money. Gibson's strategists were probably right-thinking to replace single-cuts with the SG back in 1960, as sunbursts hadn't sold well at all in their original run. But two decades on, it was clear that there was demand for a Les Paul more faithful to those Standards of the late '50s.

If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It

By the end of the 1970s, Gibson recognised they should build Les Pauls 'like they used to.' Competition was increasingly coming from the East. In Japan, Tokai were making Les Paul copies of noted quality. There were fine Burny 'Les Pauls' too. Yamaha's electric guitars were getting very good, while Ibanez were a growing force, albeit with guitars very unlike Gibson's.

Gibson had dabbled with the Les Paul KM model in 1979, but dabbled is an apt word. Circa 1500 Les Paul KMs (Kalamazoo Models) were made, but it wasn't quite a repro of a classic 'burst. The KM's had exposed coil, double-cream coloured T-top humbuckers, speed knobs, large side dot markers on the neck, a Nashville bridge/stop tailpiece, Grover tuners, wide binding in the cutaway, brown backplates, and 'Les Paul KM' engraved on the truss rod cover. A good guitar, but history-minded Gibson buffs would sniff at the tiniest details. For example, KMs had no dot on the 'i' of the Gibson headstock inlay. So, KM's were close, but no cigar.

Phil Harris says, 'Being honest, I avoided every post-1960 "Standard" until the Heritage 80. They weren't that good. I preferred my bodged and refinished '68 Goldtops.

'The 1970s Les Pauls? No-one liked the two-piece body. The tobacco sunburst, although purely cosmetic, wasn't popular – it just wasn't that nice. The necks were shaped like a Les Paul Deluxe, which wasn't what Standard aficionados wanted. They just didn't tick any of the boxes.'

Harris continues: 'I was friends with Kirby [Graham 'Kirby' Gregory] from Curved Air, who bought one of Gibson's '74 so-called Standards. He thought he was buying something just like a 'burst. But he was so disgusted, he immediately put in a third humbucker – he didn't care about keeping it an authentic '74, no-one did. I met him again in 1978 and he bought one of my refinished '68 Goldtops, which was much better.

'The photo of me in my *Hooked On Classics* columns, that guitar I'm holding is not one of my 'bursts, it's actually one of my refinished '68 Goldtops! But it's one of my favourite guitars. Before the Heritage 80s – between 1974 and 1980 – don't ask me. I don't touch those Les Pauls with a bargepole, personally.'

At the same time, a few select USA dealers had requested special-order 'upgraded' Les Pauls from Gibson's Nashville factory with a highly-figured maple top, just like those first Bursts. And those guitars flew out the stores.

George Gruhn: 'Well before Gibson issued 'reissues' in their catalogue line they had already made custom runs of "reissue" models for Guitar Trader in Red Bank, New Jersey; Strings & Things in Memphis; and Leo's Music in California. The Heritage Series Les Paul models issued in 1980 were not truly faithful copies of a 1959 Les Paul Standard, but they were one of Gibson's first catalogued reissue Les Paul models. They acknowledged a long-standing public demand.'

Aerosmith's Brad Whitford – who knows his Les Pauls – was impressed enough to buy a Guitar Trader Gibson Les Paul to play in Aerosmith. But it would take the Heritage 80 Series to get closer to the source.

Heritage Champions

Gibson are now noted for their ability and fastidiousness in creating authentic reissues of yesteryear classics. But the Heritage Series 80 models weren't 100 per cent accurate either. There were three types of Gibson Les Paul Heritage Series Standard 80 – the Standard, the Elite and the Award. The latter two names had no precedence in Les Paul nomenclature, so to some picky Les Paul players, they were akin to yet more 'new' guitars – not what they wanted. But the ➔

1979-1982
Retailers Guitar Trader, Jimmy Wallace and Leo's also order 'special' LPs more akin to the first 'bursts, with highly figured flame maple tops

1980-1982
Heritage Series introduced. The Standard 80 is the closest to a '58-'60 'burst in 20 years, though the cutaway is sharper. The Elite boasts an ebony neck and quilted top

1983
Gibson get wise and make the Standard Reissue (based on a '59). It's the start of a long line of 'authentic' new/old Les Pauls with 'proper' specs

2014
Gibson Custom Shop 'Collector's Choice' models are now a line in themselves, with precise repro's of original 'bursts played by Bernie Marsden, Peter Green/Gary Moore, John Sebastian and many more

Grovers and logo may be odd, but the 'narrow' headstock with accurate back-angle was a big improvement

Heritage Series models were certainly closer to a '59 Standard than Gibson had made in two decades.

Gibson were finally listening to their many fans. As Les Paul lover Slash later noted, 'That '59 vibe can't be beat. Bottle it in a brand new guitar, and you'll have lines around the block.'

The devil is in the details, as always. On the new Heritage 80 models, Gibson recreated the '50s neck carve, the 'dish' carve on the maple top, the headstock shape, and a deep tenon at the neck/body join. And all the Heritage LPs were made without weight relief/tone chambers, a design technique Gibson had introduced in the '70s. Les Paul Heritage 80s are totally solidbody guitars. Pick one up, and you'll know.

Between 2000 and 3000 Heritage Les Paul models were made between 1980 and 1982. Although closer to a '59 than before, they're still quite easy to spot at some distance: the horn on the cutaway is notably sharper than a genuine '58-'60 'burst, for one thing. They came in an array of colours of cherry burst, honey burst, black, wine red and goldtop – though the first two are by some way the most commonly found. Goldtop Heritage LPs, for example, are rare. And a black Heritage? Some argue that was Gibson missing the point again: black Customs are highly treasured in their own right, but wasn't the Heritage line supposed to capture that vibe of classic sunbursts?

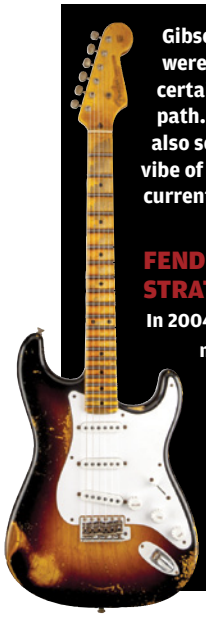
The differences between the Standard, Elite and Award Heritage 80 Les Pauls are subtle but significant. The Standards had a one-piece mahogany body, a three-piece mahogany neck with rosewood fingerboard (with a 'medium-to-big' profile) and Grover kidney tuners.

The Elite had a quilted maple top, a one-piece mahogany neck and an ebony fingerboard. Again, this wasn't strictly accurate to original sunbursts, but they were arguably 'posher' than even the originals. The Award was the rarest of the three, with only around 50 made. This expanded on the Elite by adding gold hardware and a 'Heritage Award' neckplate. But, as with the Elite, it's something of a mongrel to some purists – a halfway point between an original Standard and Custom – even if it is undoubtedly a great Les Paul of any era. The reason for the 'Award' name was quite simple: Gibson made the limited run to 'award' guitar stores for selling Heritage models.

Although Gibson's method of serial-numbering had caused some confusion amongst players in the 1970s, an original Heritage 80 model is easy to verify up-close. The back of the headstocks have regular Gibson-style serial numbers but an extra four digits underneath, and a 'made in the USA' stamp. All numbers and letters are stamped into the headstock. So far, so nerdy.

PAST MASTERS Selling 'New' Old Gear: A Guitar Industry Staple

Gibson's Heritage 80 Series weren't precise reissues but certainly started Gibson on that path. Many other manufacturers also seek to recapture the original vibe of guitar classics. You can currently buy...



FENDER CUSTOM SHOP 1954 STRATOCASTER

In 2004, the Fender Custom Shop made a limited run of a 1954 Reissue Stratocaster for the guitar's 50th anniversary. A decade on comes a 60th anniversary Fender Custom Shop 'Heavy Relic' '54.

MARTIN 1921 000-28K

Martin make an acoustic just like they did 93 years ago. The Martin Authentic 1921 000-28K has all the original spec of a breakthrough acoustic, with not even a truss rod in sight, and a slotted headstock. It's still $7500.

GRETSCH G6120-1959LTV CHET ATKINS

Here, Gretsch recreate the vibe of the instrument favoured 55 years ago by legend Chet Atkins. Like a Gibson Heritage 80, it's not strictly accurate as TV Jones weren't making pickups (as fitted on current models) in 1959.

IBANEZ TS808 REISSUE

It's not just guitars and amps – Ibanez currently make a reissue of their 1970s Tube Screamer Overdrive Pro TS808 pedal, as used by Stevie Ray Vaughan.

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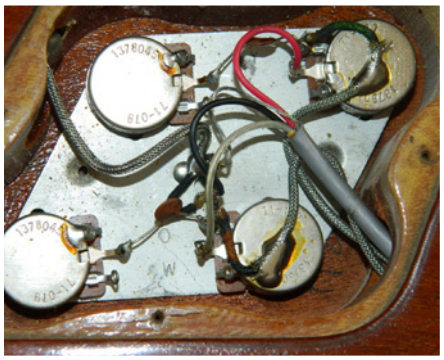
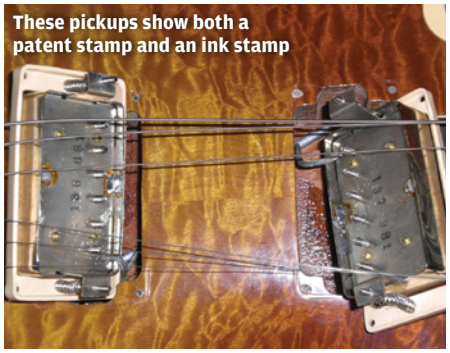
A fine example of a regular Standard 80 in honey burst




These pickups show both a patent stamp and an ink stamp

Serial number, Made In USA stamp and extra four-digit stamp

Engineer Tim Shaw was meticulous in diagnosing '50s PAFs, and his pickups are now highly valued amongst collectors

Chasing History And Chasing The Sound

The 'vintage vibe' of Heritage Les Pauls went further than flamed/quilted maple tops and subtle-carved looks. Part of Gibson's programme was to get back to the fabled PAF (Patent Applied For) pickups. The history of Gibson humbuckers is itself a whole story, but the Heritage Series was significant.

Keen to recapture the sound of original PAFs, Gibson assigned their engineer Tim Shaw on some 'PAF-ology'. Shaw was meticulous in diagnosing various '50s PAFs: how the coils were spun, the magnets used, how many windings and so on. It was a wise but also necessary move. The likes of Seymour Duncan and DiMarzio were by then creating great humbuckers that were often re-fitted into Les Pauls by Gibson fans disappointed by the company's own pickups. Gibson knew that their own 'buckers had to get better. And that meant going back, again.

Tim Shaw's work was thorough and scientific. Analysing various '50s PAFs, he recalled, 'Most were Alnico 2s, but some were 5s. In the process of making an Alnico 5, they stick a magnet in a huge coil for orientation, but an unoriented 5 sounds a lot like a 2. They started with Alnico 2 and then switched to Alnico 5.'

Shaw discovered that original PAF magnets were also a little thicker than 1980 production magnets. 'Magnetic strength is largely a function of the area of the polarised face; increasing the face size gives you more power,' he explained. He also analysed the coating on internal wire and more. By using science, Tim Shaw managed to revive – as well as he could – a '50s PAF pickup.

Shaw later met Seth Lover, who designed Gibson's PAF humbucker in the '50s, at a 1980s NAMM show. Lover apparently laughed when asked about a precise spec for windings. Lover told Shaw, 'We wound them until they were full.'

Shaw's hoodoo/voodoo work might seem frivolous from that anecdotal story, but no. 'Shawbuckers' or 'TimBuckers' are themselves now highly valued in the world of guitar collectors. Tim Shaw's pickups were another piece of the jigsaw. Les Paul expert Phil Harris says of 'Shawbuckers', 'they're like a hot PAF. They're maybe less tonally subtle than an original PAF, but the delivery is like a sledgehammer. And back off the tone, and they sound really sweet too. They're fantastic pickups.' The irony of it all? Tim Shaw now works for Fender.

Unlike many '70s-made Gibson Les Pauls, Heritage 80s quickly got into the hands of influential players. Dave Murray from Iron Maiden started playing a Heritage 80, which helped a lot. 'They got credibility and acceptance,' observes Harris. 'To me, it was the first time since 1968 that Gibson had made a "proper" Les Paul in its own right.'

Status Of The Heritage 80

To some, a Gibson Les Paul Heritage 80 is hardly a pivotal guitar. Its name certainly doesn't have the kudos of a 1959 'burst or a 1968 Custom – those were very special guitars of their own era. But others now think Heritage 80s are nearing that realm.

Heritage 80s were not historically accurate to original 'bursts, but they were close enough. They look and sound great, and have their own charms. On various fan websites

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you'll see many Les Paul fanatics singing their praises: 'Finding that 1959 'burst tone on a budget' is just one blog headline about Heritage 80s. In the end, they were pivotal. They were a benchmark for a new Les Paul.

Phil Harris doesn't mind the differences in a between a '59 Burst and the Heritage 80s and the more faithful Gibson reissues that followed. 'I prefer to see the positive,' he says. 'You see that cutaway horn and you know: it's a Heritage 80 Standard. But it's a great guitar in its own right. I looked in the mirror this morning, and I'm not perfect, I'm no Robert Redford! But if it works, it's great. Heritage 80s are really great guitars.

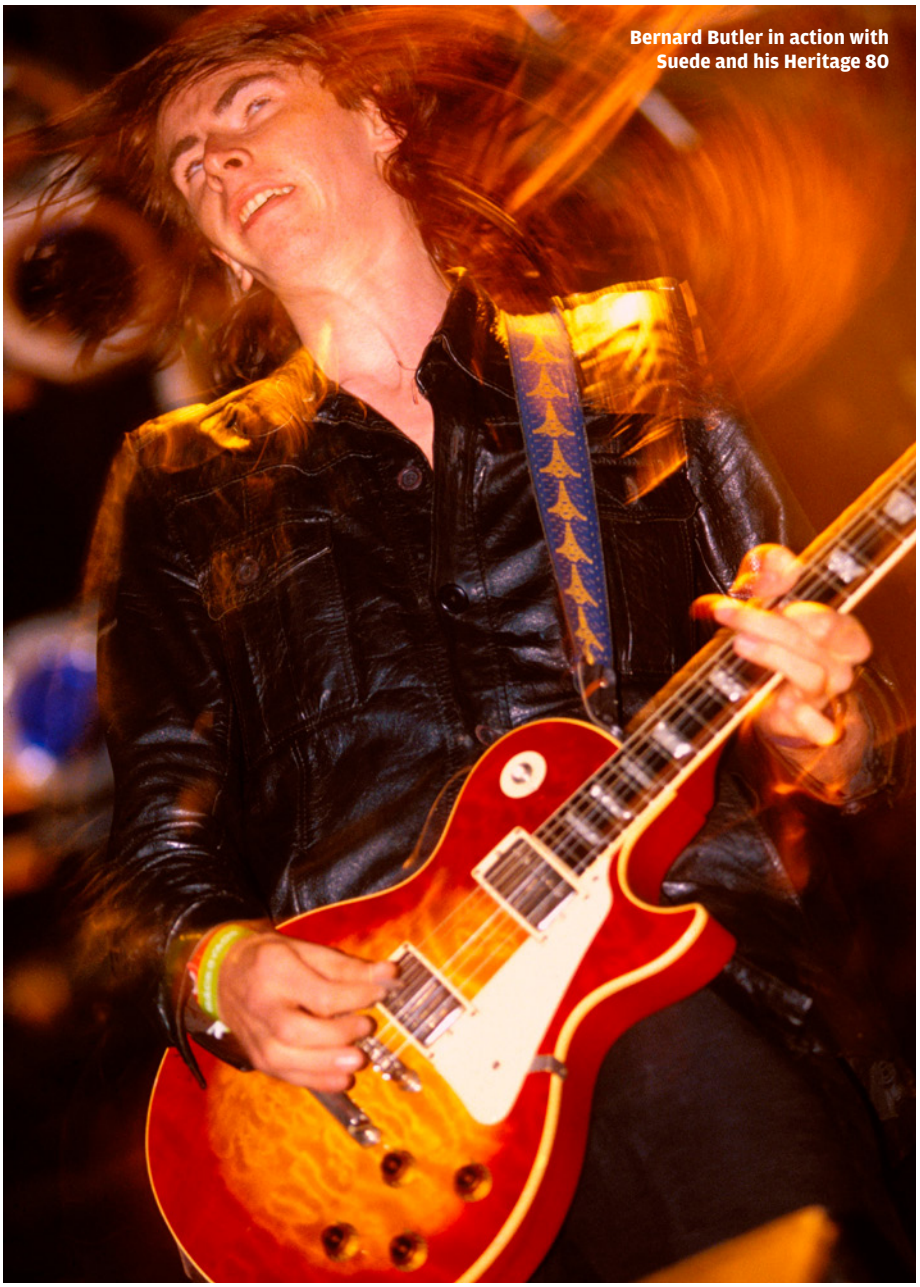
'Imperfection sometimes makes individuality. I like that it's got the sharp cutaway, a heavy tailpiece, a German bridge, that the knobs sit too low than on an original 'burst. It's funny. On later guitars, Gibson got some of the period detail more correct, but the Heritage 80 Standards are, in many ways, more individual... if that makes sense.'

Harris owns a Les Paul Heritage 80 built by Gibson for the Moody Blues' Justin Hayward, later gifted to Status Quo's Francis Rossi, and then bought by Phil. That's good 'provenance' but Harris keeps the guitar because it's a great player. 'I will never sell it, believe me,' he says. 'And I think I know my Les Pauls.'

The Heritage 80 Les Pauls weren't 'true' reissues of the famed '58-'60 'guitars, but their popularity pushed Gibson in the reissue direction. Any original 'burst is now so valuable, they are out of the price range of anyone but superstars or mega-minted collectors. Heritage 80s are an alternative. And to Phil Harris, they remain a good buy... that's if you can find one.

'I think a Heritage Standard 80 is probably a great investment,' says Harris. 'You can maybe get one for £3000. You can't buy a 2014 Les Paul '58 Standard reissue for that. And remember, all the guys playing real 'bursts in the '60s and '70s were playing 20-year-old guitars. A Heritage 80 is now 34 years old. Guitars mature, in my mind. It's interesting; my son plays, and of all my guitars he chose to have in his house, he chose my Heritage 80. I keep taking it back, but for all the original 'bursts in our house, the Heritage 80 Series has a special place.'

As often with Gibson and other guitar makers, it's a sometimes baffling tale. Only circa 1450 Standard Bursts were made between 1958 and 1960. They were discontinued because they were 'unpopular' (actually true), but they are now the most collectable Gibson Les Paul guitars in the world. Less than 3000 Heritage 80s were made (and that includes quilt-top Elites and Award models, not just the more Burst-alike Standards). And Gibson discontinued the Heritage 80 series because... well, who knows? Though their success eventually got Gibson back to making 'proper' reissues.



Bernard Butler in action with Suede and his Heritage 80

Picture: Mick Hutson/Redferns/Getty Images

'The Heritage 80 Standard is a great guitar. Later on Gibson got the details more correct, but imperfection makes for individuality'

Not every expert is a total fan of the Heritage 80s. George Gruhn says, 'I'd question whether the Heritage Series models are "underappreciated". While they were some of the earliest reissues to have appeared in Gibson catalogues, they are not especially faithful copies of the old ones. In my opinion? They are not as good as many of Gibson's new vintage reissues.'

But for fan Phil Harris, the lesson was at least clear. 'The Heritage Series brought the idea of proper reissues to the fore. I'd even say the Heritage 80 Standard is probably the most financially-important guitar in Gibson's Les Paul range. Why? It told Gibson that they should also look back, not just forward. And that's what they've done since.

'They say big oaks grow from little acorns, don't they? In terms of Gibson Les Pauls today, the Heritage 80s were that little acorn.'

Guitar & Bass thanks Nashville's George Gruhn (Gruhn.com), London's Phil Harris (Harris-Hire.co.uk) and Missouri's Route 66 Classic Guitars (Route66classicguitars.com) for their expertise, help and photos.

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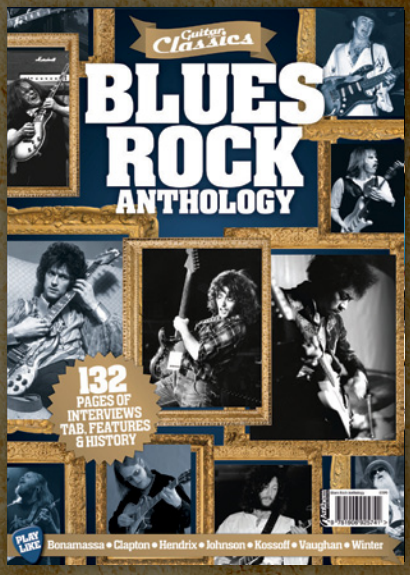

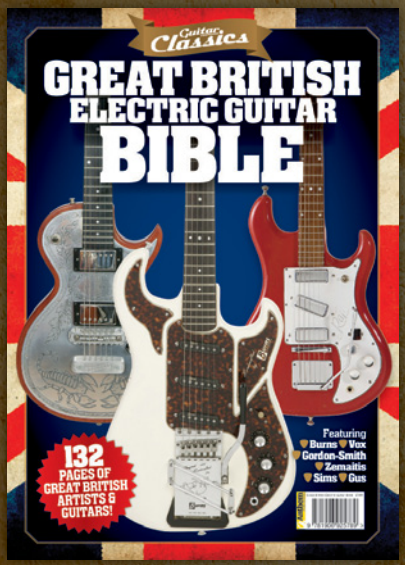

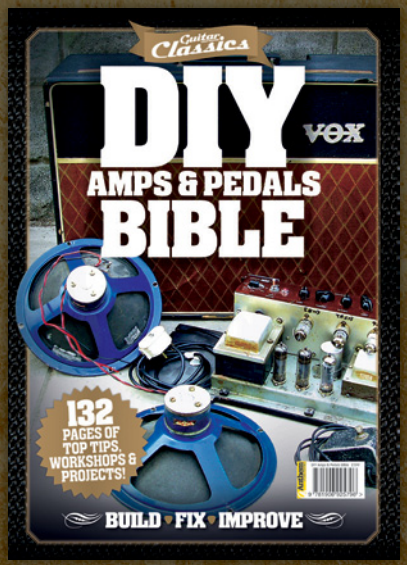

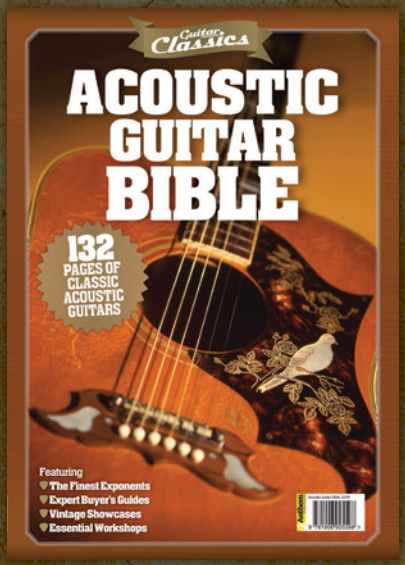

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WORLDWIDE

Shades Of Black

Black Label Society are ready to rage once more, and Zakk Wylde joins us to explain why he painted his studio black and to tell a few tall stories about his new guitarist. Interview by **Michael Heatley**

When you're hot, you're hot, so they say – and as he speaks to *Guitar & Bass*, Zakk Wylde is most definitely not. Having last year released the live DVD/CD *Unblackened*, featuring stripped-down versions of songs from throughout the history of his band Black Label Society, he's been sent north of the border to Canada to promote it.

'We're in the frozen tundra doing acoustic rock right now,' he drawls good-naturedly over the transatlantic phone line. 'We have the polar-bear pullovers over at the Black Label merch stand, so we're having a good time out here. We're on our way to London, Ontario now; that's an 18-hour drive.' Are these the worst conditions he's ever toured in? Zakk just laughs. 'I've been married for 28 years and I've got four kids – this is nothing!'

The sub-zero trek has clearly taken its toll, however; the interview was postponed twice as Wylde wrestled with throat problems. At the third time of asking he proves an entertaining conversationalist in the vein of Jack Black or Ted Nugent. The Canadian venture fills in time before promotion of his new, April-released Black Label Society album starts in earnest. It also enables him to get to know new right-hand man Dario Lorina, who joined in January from Lizzy Borden when long-serving Nick Catanese committed to his other band, Kaldera.

'Nick said "Zakk, I want to invest 1,000 per cent into my own thing, the writing and everything," and we said, "Okay, Nick, we always support you, we love you brother," so Nick's out there knocking that out. We were walking down the street and we saw this 24-year old kid sitting in the gutter, just lying there. And I said, "Look at the state of this one over here! He looks like he would fit in with Black Label really well." So I had him try my vest on, he looked good, and I said "Great – you wanna join a band?" The lucky thing is we found out he can play guitar, and he's really awesome!'

So no issues adjusting to your new guitar partner? 'No trouble at all. And the benefit of him being homeless is we only have to give him half the deal, and he's over the moon with it!'

Equally happily, new long-player *Catacombs Of The Black Vatican* has all the BLS hallmarks: indeed, Wylde's proud pre-release soundbite was: 'It's going to be the same as the last nine records, just different song titles.' As for the album title, it could be said to betray just a little domestic discord in the Wylde household – though anyone who names two of their children Hendrix and Sabbath clearly wears the trousers. ➔

Gear

Guitars
Maple Gibson Les Paul Custom, Bullseye model Les Paul, Gibson Firebird, Gibson ZV, two Les Paul Juniors, Custom Shop Moderne

Amps
Marshall stacks

Effects
MXR Black Label Chorus, MXR Carbon Copy delay, MXR Phase 90, MXR Berzerker overdrive, Jim Dunlop Rotovibe, Jim Dunlop signature CryBaby wah

'We saw this 24-year old kid lying in the gutter. Luckily we found he can play guitar'

Photo: Justin Reich

And another thing...

In April 2011 Zakk made a surprise appearance on TV's *American Idol* as guitarist for contestant James Durbin. The performance was of the Sammy Hagar anthem *Heavy Metal*

'My studio is called the Black Vatican, and the studio is actually black. I remember when I told my wife Barbara "We're going to paint it black and it's gonna be awesome," she said "You're not gonna paint it black. What are you, like 12 years old?" I said "No, I'm 13 and I play in a band called Black Label, not Brown Label, so we're painting the house black. If you were married to Jimi Hendrix it'd be purple right now!" So we painted it black, and now the studio is the Black Vatican.'

Zakk was laid low by blood clots in 2009 and was forced to cancel a tour with Mudvayne and Static-X. 'I don't drink any more and I've gotta take blood thinners every day,' he reveals. So while the four years between last electric album *Order Of The Black* and his new release is understandable, there had been a similar delay between *Order Of The Black* and its predecessor, *Shot To Hell*.

Given the gaps between releases, the process of writing and recording is remarkably quick. When Zakk puts his mind to something, it gets done. 'We don't spend six months or a year making an album, that's insane. You get in there, you knock it out, and you're done with it.

'We got off the road after doing the Gigantour [the 2013 jaunt on which BLS were special guests of Megadeth] and I asked my wife, "How much time do I have before the fellas get out here?" She says "You have 25 days", so I have 25 days to write a record. I'd just have a cup of Lava Java in the morning, go out and crank my Marshall through an octave pedal and some reverb so it sounds like I'm in Madison Square Garden, then I'd start writing riffs.

'Then when the guys came out, we sat down and tracked 15 songs. I'd have Adam [Klumpp, in-house engineer] burn me a CD, I'd go sit out in the truck, listen to the backing tracks and start coming up with melodies. Then I'd write the lyrics right in the truck and then sing them. That's it, then the record's done. It took the guys about two weeks to mix the record, and they did a phenomenal job. JD [John DeServio, BLS bass guitarist] and Adam would be mixing, I'd come in at the end of the day and listen to it, like tasting a soup, and say "A little more tabasco in there, a little more cilantro [coriander]" or something, then it's all done.'

So, to repeat: Zakk wrote the whole record, from beginning to end, in 25 days. 'The only things I had were *Angel Of Mercy*, which I had lying around on a piano, and *Shades Of Grey*, which I wrote on an acoustic guitar. The rest of it's all brand new stuff.' That includes four songs that didn't make the cut and will not be discarded. 'For me, bonus tracks are usually throwaway songs, but none of them are throwaways. Different territories want different things, so I said okay, put 11 on the record and we have four left over to make everybody happy.'

The album runs the stylistic gamut, from the opening *Fields Of Unforgiveness* with its belligerent chorus, *So you think that it's over/You think that it's done,* to the cool '50s vibe of *Shades Of Grey*. The running order was decided upon after the dust settled, but only one place was above discussion. 'We listened to Fields Of Unforgiveness and thought we've definitely got to start the record with it.'

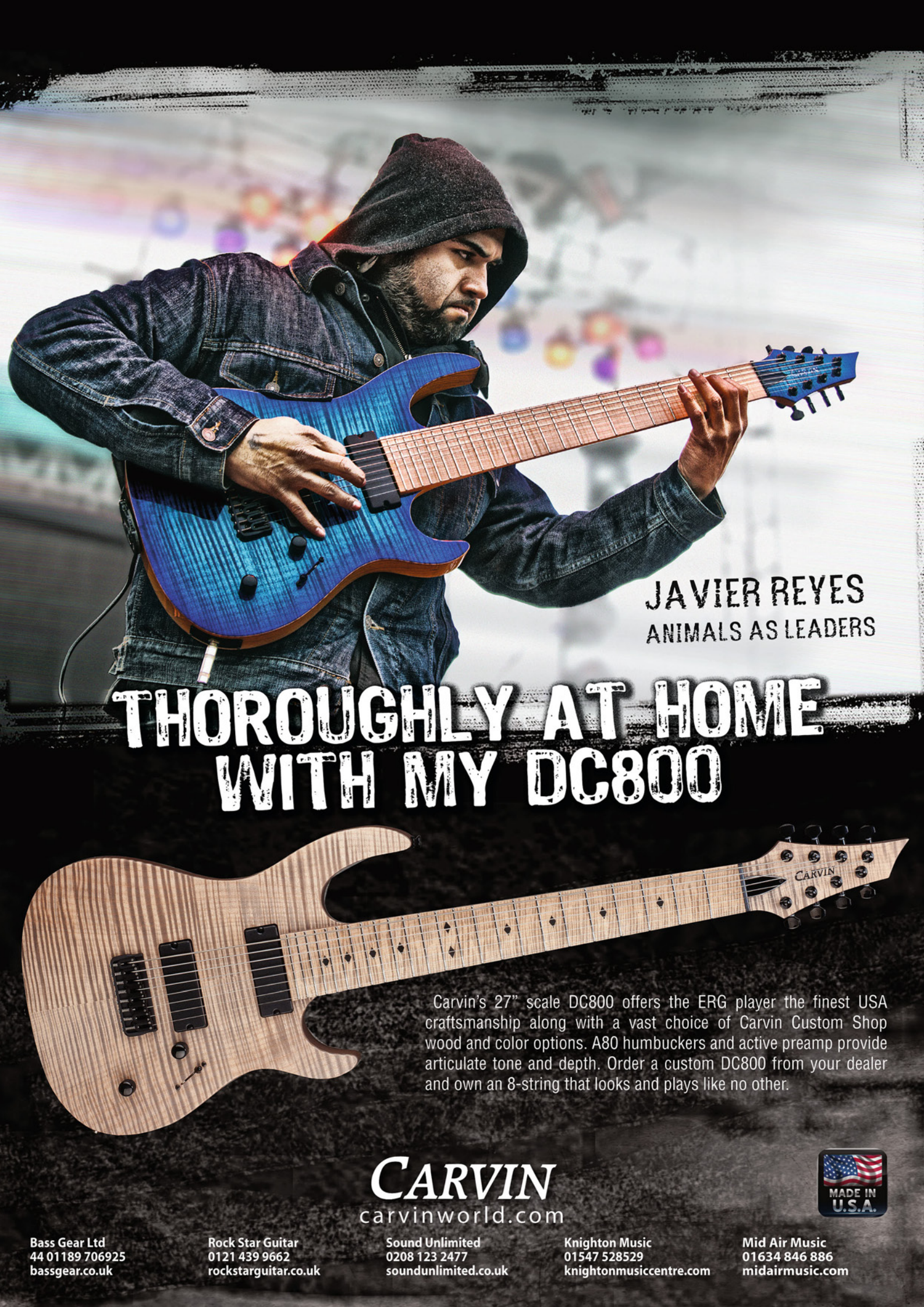
Zakk's workhorse axe was his custom-built 'Maple Vertigo', a Gibson Les Paul Custom with a maple neck, maple body and mahogany back. 'They did a

IN HIS OWN WRITE

Zakk's 13-city Canadian trek mixed music with readings from his 2012 book, *Bringing Metal To The Children: The Complete Berzerker's Guide To World Tour Domination*.

The book was co-written with Eric Hendrikx. 'It's about the sacred guardsman of all things ridiculous in the music business – of the gaping, fisting experience that is the music business!' Zakk explains. 'When me and Eric sat down and wrote that book, that was just from years of sitting there, talking about how ridiculous the music business is and it always ended with us saying, "Someday we've gotta write a book about all this ridiculous crap!" – and we finally did.

'It's not so much an autobiography, but like you and me sitting in a pub and you saying "Zakk, you're not gonna believe what happened the other day at the magazine," and I'll say "What happened?" and you're telling me this story and I'm just like "Are you kidding me?!" And you're saying "No I wish I was making this up, but it actually happened" and I laugh and say "You've gotta write a book, man." Just because you can't make these stories up! We were literally on the floor crying laughter while we were writing.'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Listen up

OZZY OSBOURNE
No More Tears (1991)
Ozzy's sixth studio album, Zakk's second with him, was also one of his two best-selling albums in North America, alongside *Blizzard Of Ozz*

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY
Sonic Brew (1999)
Southern rock-flavoured debut album and one Zakk has threatened to perform in its entirety to celebrate its 15th anniversary. Bonus track *Lost My Better Half* stands out

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY
Catacombs Of The Black Vatican (2014)
Latest offering from Zakk, to be presented live at this year's Download Festival, with eleven rip-roaring guitar-fuelled anthems

Zakk with his Gibson ZV, a cross between an SG and a Flying V

Photo: Justin Reich

phenomenal job with that thing, and that's what you hear on this record. I use the Firebird on some of the solos, like on *Damn The Flood*. Then I used my Gibson Pelham Blue Bullseye for *Angel Of Mercy* and some of the other ones. But the majority is that Maple Vertigo.'

When it comes to obtaining clean sounds, Zakk has two go-tos – and both are Les Paul Juniors. 'Ozzy gave me a Leslie West tobaccoburst for my 20th birthday. It's got an amazing round and warm sound, so I used that through the Roland Jazz Chorus for *Shades Of Grey*. I also have a double cutaway Junior [producer] Michael Beinhorn gave me when we were working on *Ozzmosis;* it's Les Paul-signed.

'The majority of the whole album is my new signature Marshall that we're designing right now. For effects, I use all my Dunlop stuff and all my signature stuff, so it will just be the Black Label Chorus, I use the Carbon Copy if I want to use any delay. Then obviously the Phase 90, my distortion pedal, the Rotovibe and the wah-wah pedal.'

Mention of signature gear brings up the oddity that is the Epiphone Graveyard Disciple, a coffin-shaped guitar inspired by Bo Diddley's oblong Gretsch. 'We called it Bo Deadly – that was its nickname!' As for the 'Moderne of Death', reviving a failed Gibson design of the late '50s, 'we were talking about how hideous-looking the Moderne is... I talked to Frank over at the Custom Shop and said I wanted to do some tweaks on it and make it 21st century. Block inlays, a Floyd, the EMGs and a body on top of a body, so it's as thick as a Les Paul Custom. I sent them drawings and they knocked it out of the park with that thing. The guitar is phenomenal.'

Zakk takes at least 20 guitars on the road, plus 10 or 12 Marshall amps. 'We have the Walls Of Doom and everything like that; I'm running out of two and Dario's running out of two. It's in stereo because we use stereo chorus, so it goes to one head and another line goes to another head. Two heads, two cabs.'

Zakk owns more than 300 guitars. 'None of them are junk. They're all playable. I have John Entwistle's book at my house and he said everything he owns, he can play – there's no junk, and there's no firewood in there.'

Older acquisitions include signature models from Leslie West, Machine Head's Phil Demel and the late Dimebag Darrell would be the first he'd pull out of a burning building: 'The sentimental value on all those fiddles,' he sighs.

It's been 15 years since the first Black Label Society album and 20 since *Pride And Glory,* his first self-fronted project – but to Zakk it doesn't seem long at all. 'If you're always working,' he reasons, 'you're not sitting around and you can't get bored. For Ozzy, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant or whatever, looking back at when they started Sabbath and Zeppelin, they must look back and think, "Dude, that seems like yesterday".'

Only time will tell if Zakk Wylde will be mentioned by historians in the same breath as these legends. But he's not about to stop trying... come hell, high water or two-metre snowdrifts.

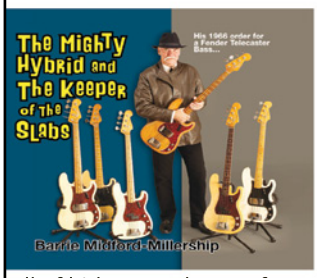
UNITED IN METAL

Zakk soared to overnight fame in 1987 when he became lead guitarist and co-writer with Ozzy Osbourne, succeeding Jake E Lee in the role immortalised by the late, great Randy Rhoads. Wylde's first album with the ex-Sabbath singer was the following year's *No Rest For The Wicked*. Recalling how he felt when he first joined forces with Osbourne, Zakk says: 'For Ozzy, who was such a huge Beatles fan and such a huge John Lennon guy, the equation would be like the Beatles getting back together and asking [Ozzy] to do John's stuff because of me being such a huge Ozzy guy with Sabbath. It's no different to me being a kid and having pictures of all the Manchester United guys – Georgie Best and David Beckham – and now I'm wearing the uniform.'

His most famous Les Paul Custom, known as the Grail, reminds him of those days. 'I wrote *Miracle Man* on that, my first Ozzy song, so the memories that are attached to that guitar... I still use it and it still sounds amazing, but it doesn't leave the house – it stays at the Vatican with the Rebel [his iconic Les Paul studded with bottle caps].'

The Mighty Hybrid and The Keeper of The Slabs

England's connection to the Fender Bass



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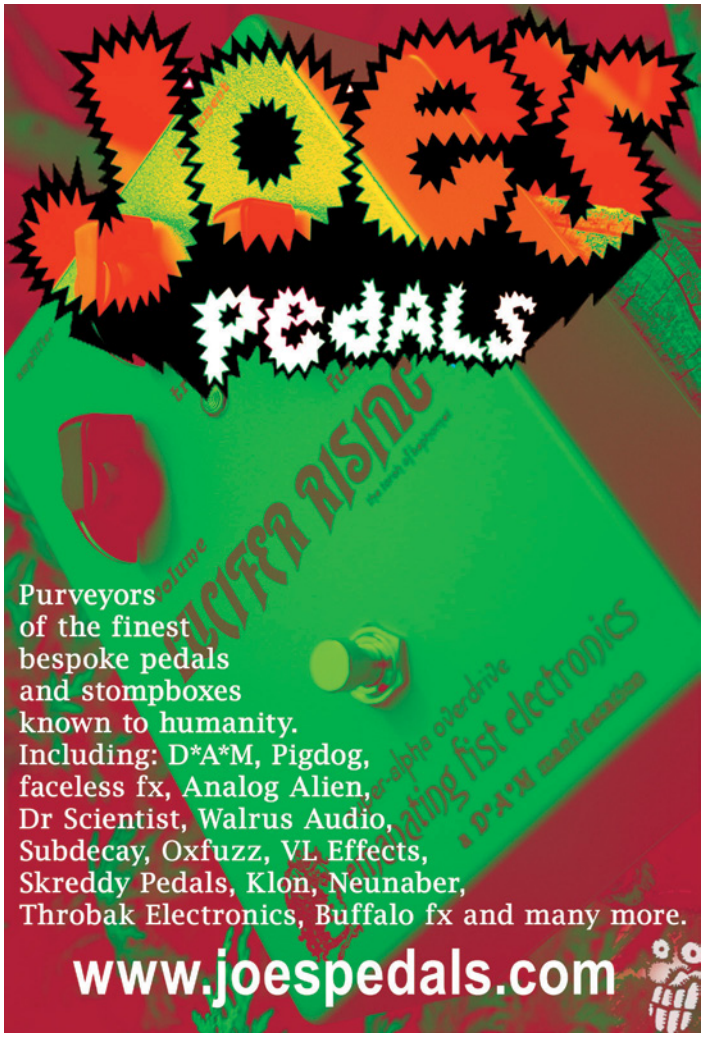

Photo: Mike Prior

CHARLTON Aesthetic

Beloved troubadour and tunesmith Glenn Tilbrook has a new solo album out packed with oddball instruments, plus new work with Squeeze partner Chris Difford on the way. Interview by **Steve Bailey**

There's something unique about Squeeze's honed pearls of pop perfection that has enabled the band to transcend genres, fashion and territories to become universally adored. Their inventive, lyrical narratives, often set in the environs of their native South East London, capture the nuances of life with such wit and melodic eloquence that the songwriting and vocal partnership of Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford have often been compared to Lennon and McCartney. Songs like *Tempted, Cool For Cats* and *Take Me I'm Yours* still routinely punctuate the airwaves, and of late there's been something of a groundswell to recognise Tilbrook's unsung yet considerable six-string prowess. His guitar was rarely to the fore with Squeeze, only emerging from behind the parapet when completely integral to the whole song, but shift your focus from the ingenious songsmithery for a moment and you'll recognise that subtle flashes of highly articulate twang have been right there under your nose all along.

There are many deft guitar flourishes in classics like *Black Coffee In Bed, Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)* and *Messed Around,* but take a straw poll amongst guitar-playing Squeeze fans and they'll all point you to the solo on *Another Nail In My Heart* as the most compelling evidence of Tilbrook's instrumental talent. It's a supremely canny piece of work that almost stands as a piece of music on its own, yet it sits in the song so perfectly that it's easy to overlook the skill required to create something of such intricacy.

Not that Glenn has ever been bothered by the lack of recognition; he's always been a song-driven guitar man. 'There's not an awful lot of room in Squeeze for my natural style of playing,' he muses. 'Really, my playing is blues-based. That's how I learned to play, so if I have a solo I'm not going to play blues over one of those things... I see my job as constructing a tune.

'For me, it's like working out a jigsaw puzzle. When I was coming up with solos like *Another Nail* I would drop in one phrase at a time and then, at the end of that, learn it and then play it. It was the same for *Black Coffee* or *In Quintessence* from *East Side Story* – they're all little solos that are tunes unto themselves, really. I love to play lead, but I don't think with my new album, *Happy Endings,* there's really a solo on it. I suppose that speaks volumes about where my priorities are.'

Glenn grew up a big Hendrix fan, and his dad's love of jazz legends like of Joe Pass, Les Paul and Wes Montgomery also left a lasting impression. 'All that has filtered through. Of course Hendrix was a big Wes Montgomery fan too, so there were two separate paths that led back there. I love that octave thing – I do quite a lot of that when I play.'

> *'Hendrix was a big Wes Montgomery fan. I do that octave thing quite a lot'*

Despite his focus on composition Glenn does enjoy playing lead, and in recent times has found a more favourable outlet for it with blues circuit stalwarts Nine Below ➔

Gear

Guitars
1954 and 1979 Strats, B-bender Telecaster, 1954 Telecaster, Taylor 6 & 12-string acoustics, Yamaha 6 & 12-string acoustics, Avalon, Guild and Gibson acoustics, Eko lap steel, ukulele bass, sitar

Amps
Roland Cube, Fender Deville. With Squeeze: HH and Boogie amps

Effects
None now, but with Squeeze he used a Boss Chorus Ensemble

Squeeze in 2013: Difford, Tilbrook, John Bentley (bass), Simon Hanson (drums) and Stephen Large (keyboards)

Squeeze in 1980. L-R: Chris Difford, drummer Gilson Lavis (above), bassist John Bentley (seated), Tilbrook (with 1970s ES-150DC) and Jools Holland

Zero, also featuring the guitar of fellow Londoner Dennis Greaves. They even made an album together in 2011 called *The Co-Operative*.

'I'm really proud of that record,' says Glenn. 'They're a great band with brilliant players. Brendan the drummer is fantastic, there's a lovely swing to his playing – all of them have got that. I feel I've found a home where my guitar playing can naturally blossom.

Bards of Blackheath: Difford & Tilbrook

Me and Dennis have a shared love for Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac – three guitarists who never trod on each other's toes, just lovely interplay. Dennis and I are very different. He's got that lovely vibrato and a great tone, but it's very different to mine. When we play together it really inspires both of us. It's wonderful.'

The Co-operative album was recorded at Glenn's studio, 45RPM in Charlton. You can easily compare the two player's styles: Dennis is on the left of the mix and Glenn on the right for pretty much the whole album. 'I was playing my 1954 Strat through a Fender Deville and Dennis was playing his 335 through his Marshall – very different sounds, but it always seems to work. I got that Strat in 1986 from Gruhn's in Nashville and honestly, it's so lovely... it's beautiful to play, and the tone of it! The finish is extremely messed up. The closest resemblance is to Rory Gallagher's old guitar. Someone varnished it, and the varnish has all dropped off. I think it looks lovely now the varnish is gone. I haven't had anything done to it. It's just a lump of wood... but somehow great.'

For the first five years of Squeeze Tilbrook mainly played Strats, but he hasn't always eschewed the humbucker. Various Gibsons were also present during that period, and in the video for *Another Nail In My Heart* he sported a Yamaha SG – but he can't be certain if it actually featured on the record.

'Erm, let's say it did,' he laughs uncertainly. 'I had it and I got rid of it quite quickly, but a mate of mine had a Gibson SG and I used that a bit around then as well. In fact I just got another one of those now – the frets just seem to go on and on.'

Then, in 1987, Glenn discovered the B-bender Telecaster, and as a result stuck with Teles for 15 years. 'I've got one of the original Parsons-White pull-strings,' he enthuses. 'It makes the guitar about three times heavier because there's this lump of metal in it, but it plays brilliantly. It's basically a big metal rod that yanks the tuning. You can control whether it bends up a semitone or a whole tone, and it gives you that pedal steel-ish experience. I used it on *Hourglass* the same year I got it. I had a pull-string, and I was gonna use it! There's another song called *The Truth* from 1991 where it's featured heavily.'

> *'I did a vocal for Elvis Costello and he gave me a '54 Tele. He's tried to buy it back since'*

His other favourite Tele was a gift from Elvis Costello. 'I did a vocal for him on a song of his called *From A Whisper To A Scream*, around 1981, and he gave me a '54 Telecaster as a present for doing it. It's a marvellous guitar which he's tried to buy back off me a couple of times since. It is brilliant – the attack, the bite of it. They're really beautiful guitars just to hold.'

The title track of the 1993 album of *Some Fantastic Place* featured a white Washburn that may have been roughly Tele-shaped, but hot humbuckers ended the comparisons right there. 'I think Washburn gave that to me at some point. It was just lying around, and it was the nearest thing to a sustaining pickup sound that I had at the time. I think I went through one of those old Roland chorus pedals with sustain and compression. I don't use pedals now but I liked using them then, and it was a big sound. You should have heard the racket it made when I wasn't playing – it would just feed back all the time! That was me doing a sort of version of Brian May. I've still got it somewhere. I've still got the B-bender Tele, too. I very rarely get rid of anything. I'm not a collector. I use everything I've got.'

However, the electrics don't see any action on his third solo album, *Happy Ending* – it's very much an acoustic-led effort. Glenn took Marc Bolan's early Tyrannosaurus Rex sparse acoustic and ↦

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Glenn Tilbrook plays solo at a hometown gig at Blackheath Halls in South East London

Photo: Mike Prior

Listen up

GLENN TILBROOK
Happy Ending (2014)
Tilbrook's third solo outing majors on gentle, whimsical unplugged vignettes embellished with ukulele bass, sitar, lap steel and plenty of capo'd acoustic

THE CO-OPERATIVE
The Co-Operative (2011)
Glenn joins Nine Below Zero to create vibrant, rootsy pop rock that charms at every turn and allows Glenn and NBZ's Dennis Greaves to shine with perfectly interplayed lead work

bongo-driven material as a starting point then let things progress from there, adding unconventional embellishments with instruments such as kazoo, xylophone, and Indian harmonium.

'I've got a 1930 Gibson acoustic – I don't know the model number but it's tiny, very small-bodied, and it's got a gorgeous sound. I play that on most of it. I was doing a lot of stuff with capos at the fifth fret or the seventh fret, so for those I used either my Taylor or my Yamaha.'

George Harrison's music has been playing in the Tilbrook household a lot recently. Suitably inspired, Glenn bent his self-imposed 'no electrics' rule to find some space for a junkshop Eko lap steel. 'It's a cheapie thing. It's just like a plank with raised strings. It only has the one pickup sound and that's it, but it's got a lovely tone. You just put it through an amp with a little bit of delay, and it sounds marvellous. I can't really play, so as with the guitar there was a lot of dropping in. I don't really do lap steels as a rule but I've become very interested in trying.'

There's no traditional bass on the album either – any low tones come courtesy of a tiny ukulele bass. 'They look ridiculous but sound brilliant. It's all over the record. Honestly, acoustically it's useless, you can't play it, you can't even hear it. It looks like a joke, but plug it in and it's majestic! John Bentley, the bass player in Squeeze, got one for the acoustic bit in the middle of Squeeze shows and I was knocked out and had to get one. It's a tiny little thing with black rubber strings. It sounds almost like a Hofner bass or something like that. It has a really warm, deep sound but without a lot of sustain, and that's exactly how I like my basses. If I'm going to have a bass on something, I'll use that.'

One song from *Happy Ending, Mud Island,* revolves around childhood memories of his South East London upbringing and – slightly bizarrely given the subject matter – features a sitar. 'I liked the energy of the thing. It just seemed to fit,' Tilbrook grins. 'I bought it in India nearly 27 years ago. I played it a bit on the Nine Below Zero album *Never Too Late* two or three years ago [which Glen co-produced] and I thought, that's such a lovely sound. Again, I can't play the sitar, I don't have any of the right technique, but you can get what you want out of it just by playing a series of notes. And of course, the great thing about sitar is the amount you can bend the strings. It's made for that.

'Also, I've finally got a Jerry Jones electric sitar – I've been after one for 20 years and at last I found one in America. It arrived after this album, but it's going to be all over whatever I do next!'

Before the electric sitar odyssey can be unleashed there are some Squeeze songwriting duties to perform, which came about directly as a result of Glenn reading esteemed broadcaster and fellow Londoner Danny Baker's autobiography *Going To Sea In A Sieve.*

'*Mud Island* was inspired by two different people's memories – mine and Danny's. I know him vaguely, and I rang him up and said "I've never said this to anyone before, but I think your book would make a great musical, and I think me and Chris are the people to do it." He said, "Funny you should say that, they're already working on a TV show and I love the thought of having songs in it." So the idea has progressed from there. It's a six-part comedy drama which should come out at the end of the year. I've seen some scripts and they're really great... properly funny. The plan is Squeeze will do two songs per episode, but Chris was off doing some other stuff with the Strypes [teenage R&B sensations who Difford is mentoring] and I couldn't help but write that song, which may become part of that project as well. I don't know if they'll be full songs or part-songs. We're operating independently of the script but working along parallel lines, so it's a great position for us to be in as writers. ITV is Squeeze's label now! That's how it is. We get to do an album, and there's our promotion! It's brilliant, really.'

> *'I'm going clean and small. It's a revelation. I don't need to have a big amp behind me'*

In the meantime Tilbrook has been touring completely solo around Britain, just him in his faithful American-built RV camper equipped with seven acoustics, a single Strat and a small Roland Cube amp. 'I'm going clean and small lately,' he explains. 'It's a revelation for me on this tour. I don't need to display a huge amp or have 10 cabinets behind me. I think a tiny Fender amp might be next on the shopping list...'

Headline festival shows with Squeeze this summer are booked and with engrossing solo projects also bubbling, all to be recorded at his own studio, it seems Glenn has forged himself an enviable lifestyle. For most, we're sure, it would certainly constitute a very happy ending indeed.

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Tuning Machines:	Grover Super Rotomatic
Nut Width:	1 11/16"
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Finishes:	Sunburst
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Case:	Deluxe hard case
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Photo: Dennis Smith

Around & About

Andy Summers is back in unexpected fashion, with big songs and big riffs. Interview by **Michael Heatley**

At 71, Andy Summers is in the autumn of his life and career – yet the impossibly youthful-looking guitarist who inspired a generation when with the Police still has fields to conquer, mountains to climb. 'Well, I'm not thinking of getting into the restaurant business!' he laughs. 'I'm a guitar player, I'm a musician, a composer, I've done all kinds of music, I've played everywhere in the world... there's really not much I haven't done at this point. I play every day, I practice and I'm still really into it. It hasn't gone away, and I'm really happy about that.'

Certainly, it can't be money that motivates him. Despite Sting claiming the lion's share of the royalties from the band in which they served together – sometimes less than amicably – between 1977 and 1986, a lucrative reunion world tour in 2007-2008 must have boosted the pension fund. And given that he resides in California, there would seem every reason for Summers to put his feet up and keep the guitar purely as a pleasurable pastime.

Instead, he's forging forward with Circa Zero, advertised as his first rock band since the Police (a description he laughs at). His 'Sting' this time around is Rob Giles, a singer/multi-instrumentalist who played with a Los Angeles band called the Rescues. Badgered to make an appearance at a gig by a friend who managed them, Summers saw the band twice; in the intervening year he'd been working hard in his Bowl of Cherries studio in Venice, California, on guitar-based rock music.

'I had all these tracks, but was getting cold feet about the vocals. I asked if Rob would like to come down to my studio and maybe sing a few songs. We got into conversation and started to play stuff together and I quickly realised that this guy really had something. The chemistry seemed to be there very quickly. I got him to sing one of the tracks that I'd recorded with somebody else, and he completely blew it away – his singing was amazing. It was at that moment I was like "Oh my God, that's what I've been looking for." Rob said, "Man, we should write a rock record together," and just like that I said, "Right, let's do it."'

Though Summers' guitar collection numbers in the hundreds – his website offers beautifully photographed but frustratingly detail-free evidence – the two guitars used on the record are a Les Paul and a Strat 'with various ➔

Gear

Guitars
Fender Tele, Jaguar and Strat; Gibson Les Paul and 335

Amps
Various vintage amps, mostly Fender. 'I've got a couple of Mesa/Boogie amps; my rack is a 2:90, which I've used for years and is wonderful.'

Effects
A pedalboard and a Roland VG99 multi-FX; 'That's got great sounds on it.'

THE SUMMERS 'BURST

Summers was very much part of the '60s 'swinging London' scene, and the sunburst Les Paul he played caught Eric Clapton's eye. When the guitar Eric used to record the Bluesbreakers' 'Beano' album was stolen, he acquired Andy's as a replacement. This in turn fashioned the licks on *Fresh Cream*, the supergroup's 1966 debut. The guitar is distinguishable by a broken headstock.

Some sources state that Summers and Clapton traded guitars, Andy receiving Eric's '63 Telecaster in return, but Andy firmly corrects this. 'I didn't swap it, I sold him my Les Paul. He bought my Les Paul off me for £200 – it's worth about £1 million now. He got my Les Paul. I told him where to get his first one he ever had, and then that was stolen. He just kept calling and calling and calling me until eventually he got his way.

'Significantly and symbolically, I went to the Telecaster and the Les Paul is sitting under the bed. There you go, there's something in that. I got into the Telecaster, which became the most significant guitar for me, whereas the Les Paul became significant for Eric.'

Andy has now come back to the Les Paul, albeit to a limited degree. 'I've got three. It's not a guitar I take on stage – I find a Les Paul generally too thick and heavy a sound to use on a lot of songs, so the Strat is the principal guitar for me.'

Summers in action with a pre-CBS Fender Jaguar

Photo: Dennis Smith

And another thing...

At the height of Police fame Andy advertised for a personal assistant – and ended up hiring an American called, yes, Roxanne

devices. I like to use the Les Paul for solos because you can move a bit faster and get a bigger, crunchier sound.'

It's a long way from the Fender Telecaster and the Pete Cornish pedalboard that launched the Police's chart career back in 1978 and inspired a raft of imitators. As the man who brought effects back into fashion, how did Summers approach things when the Police returned to the stage in 2007 and he had to revisit the sounds he created in that golden period?

'I really thought it out – I was very serious about it. We're the trio with that rainbow of guitar – what are you going to do? I can't go out and play through a Fender Twin! I had a big set-up, and I basically reset all my equipment and pedals. I did it with Bob Bradshaw in LA, who had the very latest version of all that.

'It was interesting because, back in the late '70s/early '80s I started doing all the pedals and built that into the Pete Cornish board, which was an early attempt in doing this kind of stuff. Then in the late '80s/early '90s everything went digital, which was the period I really didn't enjoy so much, partly because I felt I lost the really hands-on artistic control I like to have. Then we fast-forward to the millennium and things have changed again. When I went back to Bradshaw to re-do all this, it was a combination of digital and pedals and controlling the pedals through a computer.

'On the Police tour we were playing stadiums. The shows were huge, so I had six Mesa/Boogie cabs instead of two and I had a signal that was dry in the middle and stereo reverbs to the left and the right. Once I'd programmed all the songs in the board, it was operated from the side of the stage with my guy with a remote. We only fucked up about twice in 150 concerts!'

His go-to guitar was a red Stratocaster. 'I did have the Tele and I'd play it a bit; that was the period that Fender re-made my Telecaster as a signature model. At the same time they also made a couple of Strats for me that were a copy of my original 1960 Strat that I used for a great portion of my Police career. These were so good to play, so I spent a lot of that tour with them.'

The sunburst maple-neck 'Police' Tele, now safely locked away, had had its humbucker installed before Andy acquired it in '72. He bought it from a student for $200 while teaching guitar in LA between bands. 'It was all done. That's why it was such an amazing instrument, a magic guitar. It was a hybrid. It happened to be amazingly great to play. The weight was perfect, it had an incredible back pickup, the overdrive was great.

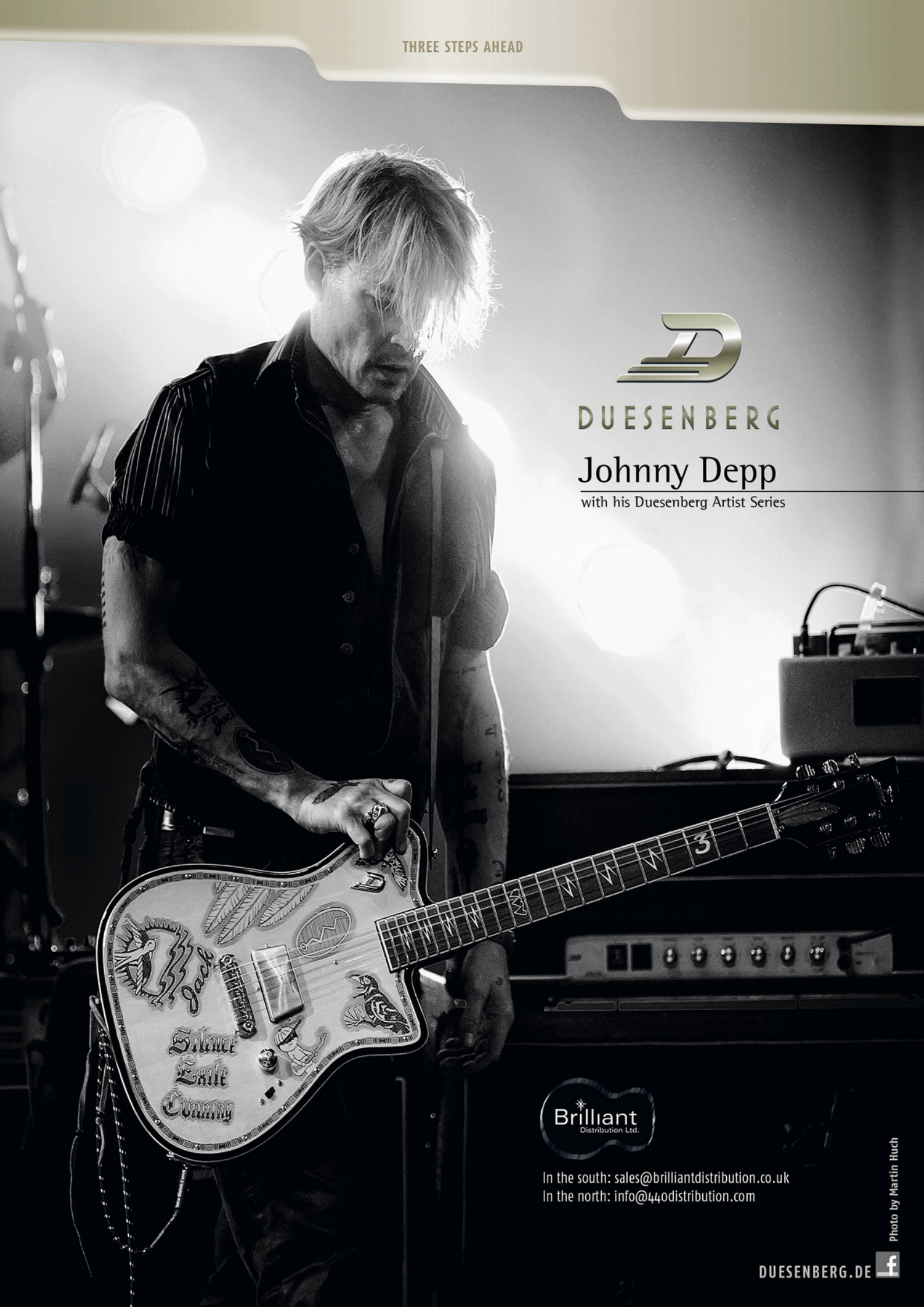
'In some ways,' he continues enthusiastically, 'that guitar was a precursor of things to come; it was ↦

ANDY WITH A CAMERA

Andy's upcoming film release, *Can't Stand Losing You: Surviving The Police*, is based on his acclaimed autobiography *One Train Later* and follows his musical journey from early days to his chance encounter with Stewart Copeland and Sting in 1977. With rare archive footage and photographs shot by Summers himself, the filmmakers catch up with the trio three decades after the break-up.

'It's not every page of the book,' Andy explains. 'It's been a very, very long haul, so I feel somewhat detached from it now. It's out in the States in July, a theatrical release, then obviously it will go to DVD and TV and all the rest of it. It's been out in Holland and Japan in the cinemas. I'm just waiting to see if we're going to get a UK release. The film's really good and there's some fantastic recent Police footage in it.'

As for the archive footage, he admits that it was a question of hunting for tiny snippets. 'There's one with the Animals, which is pretty cute. I think we were in Cleveland on TV, it was *River Deep, Mountain High*. There's that, and there's a tiny bit of me playing with Zoot Money. There is stuff from Dantalion's Chariot's *Madman Running Through The Fields*, but I'm not in it. There's another one of us playing a club somewhere; it's incredible, because obviously in that era people didn't have iPhones and the ability to film everything that moved. There's a lot of archival footage in the film and a lot of my photography. It was a long saga, but the editing is brilliant.'



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Andy Summers with Rob Giles: 'We've done shows as a trio and it's gone great'

Photo: Dylan Knight

Listen up

POLICE
Reggatta De Blanc (1979)
Their second album from 1979 captures the FX-driven Andy Summers sound that influenced a generation

CIRCA ZERO
Circus Hero (2014)
The new release. 'It's not heavy like the Foo Fighters, but it's definitely more aggressive than a lot of the Police stuff.'

ANDY SUMMERS AND GINGER BAKER
Synaesthesia (1995)
Recently reissued album. 'Ginger was living in Colorado; he came in and we played a whole album together. It's got some great tunes.'

ahead of its time. It was early, crude reworking of what you could do with a guitar before it all really set in a bit later.' Schaller tuners were his only addition. The other mods – brass bridge and saddles, an out-of-phase switch and 9v actives that boosted distortion and sustain – were all present and featured on the Masterbuilt Custom Shop tribute that, as has been noted, coincided with the 2007 reunion.

Summers' career dates back to the '60s and such evocatively-named bands as Zoot Money's Big Roll Band, Dantalion's Chariot and the Animals. The '70s found him backing artists as diverse as Kevin Coyne, David Essex and Neil Sedaka, while he took the place of a stagefright-stricken Mike Oldfield when *Orchestral Tubular Bells* did the rounds of British concert stages.

Probably the most famous riff Summers has ever played in his long and varied career was *Every Breath You Take*. The 1983 Police song was a transatlantic chart-topper, won two Grammys (one apiece for Sting and the band) and, was controversially sampled for Puff Daddy's equally successful *I'll Be Missing You* in 1997. *Whenever You Hear The Rain* earned its place on the new Circa Zero album because of a closely related guitar figure that came to Summers in a dream.

'It was one of the previous [non-collaborative] ones I had that we were thinking twice about including... we thought that perhaps it was a bit more commercial than we wanted to do. The thing that actually put it on the album, believe it or not, is the guitar lick that goes all the way through it. We had it, then we re-recorded it from my original and got a similar feeling.

'The thing that changed it in the end is I came up with a reverse version of the *Every Breath You Take* lick. I woke up one morning at 4am thinking about this track because I wasn't sure about it – then I came up with this idea and thought, "That's it!" I could hear the whole thing. I went back to the studio in the morning, tried it out and it worked. We put it on the end of this album because people will love it.'

On the live front, Circa Zero will probably just start as a trio. 'We've done shows as a trio and it's gone great. Then we'll see. I don't want a keyboardist or another guitar player because I think my playing is individual, and I don't want to cover it up with a wall of guitar.

'The whole scene is so radically different than it was,' he continues. 'Personally, I'm not interested in playing every little shitty club in the world; it doesn't make a lot of sense. I think the way to go now is basically the internet and YouTube. I think we've got a lot of hit songs on this record and what I'd like to see happen is us really build the profile over the next few months and then start to gig. I want to play; we're going to go to China this summer, and Japan is on the cards.'

Andy recognises that the days when 'the Police shipped two million records before we'd even finished making the bloody recording' are over. 'Now you sell 250,000 in the US and you're #1 and that's it. We're in a very different era.' But it's clearly one he's more than happy to be active in, Maybe the restaurant business' loss is music's gain.

Casting a long shadow: Sting, Summers, Copeland

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FANO
Alt De Facto GF6

Ex-New York vintage repair man Dennis Fano takes his cue from oddball classics and crafts a range of guitars that never were... but might have been. Review by **Huw Price**

Dennis Fano has earned a place at the top table of American boutique guitar designers and manufacturers. His modus operandi is to combine classic body and neck shapes with unexpected timbers, pickup options and hardware to create guitars that are original, yet reassuringly familiar. He's hardly alone in adopting this approach, but few pull it off with so much style.

The much-misunderstood Fender Starcaster provided the inspiration for the GF6, but beyond the body shape and the bolt-on neck, the two guitars have little in common. In contrast to the Starcaster's laminated maple body, GF6 bodies are carved from solid wood with a solid block running through the centre. Options include mahogany, korina, swamp ash and maple. Tops can also be ordered in spruce, but this review model is made from alder.

Since the back is routed from a solid block, Fano is able to provide a tummy tuck contour at the back, so although it's fairly sizeable, the GF6 feels comfortable and it's also relatively lightweight. The body is also chamfered away at the neck joint for easy upper fret access, with a corresponding curve on the neck heel.

The neck itself is maple with a palm-filling 'C' profile and binding for the rosewood fingerboard. In our opinion Fano's headstock is a big improvement,

Bound maple neck, alder body and a cutaway heel

Tilt-back headstock carries Fano-branded Kluson-type tuners

The Fender Starcaster provided the inspiration, but the GF6 has a carved solid wood body with a centre block

raking backwards to provide a suitable break angle over the nut and obviating the need for friction-inducing string trees. Neck relief adjustment happens at the nut end of the neck, and there's no truss rod cover.

Fano prefers the term 'distressing' to 'relicing' and three levels are offered besides the 'clean' non-aged option. These levels are Extra Light, Light and Medium and judging by the description, this guitar falls into the 'Extra Light' category. The hardware isn't aged at all and the gloss finish on the neck is unblemished except for a few tiny chips around the edge of the headstock.

The pre-aging action is mostly confined to the metallic pelham blue finish on the body. There are those who seem to believe that chains and belt sanders should be the tools of choice in this department, but when you see the job done to a very high standard it's obvious that the ➔

FACTFILE
FANO ALT DE FACTO GF6

DESCRIPTION **Electric guitar. Made in the USA**
PRICE **£2799**

BUILD **Semi-solid double-cut alder body, bolt-on 22-fret maple neck with bound rosewood fingerboard, tunomatic bridge and stop tailpiece, Kluson-style tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two TV Jones Powertron humbucking pickups, three-way switch, master volume and tone**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Many, just ask**

SCALE LENGTH
648mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 42mm
12th fret 53mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 20mm
12th fret 23mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 36mm
Bridge 51mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.5mm
12th fret bass 2mm
WEIGHT **3.5kg/7.7lbs**

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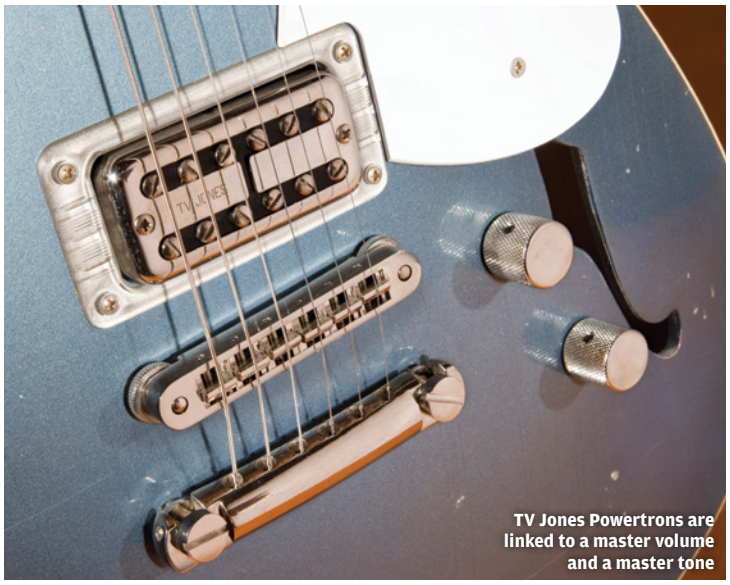
Gretsch
G6137TCB Panther Black
Super-stylish double cutaway maple body, maple neck, bone nut, ebony fretboard, 22 frets, thumbnail inlays, chrome hardware, two FilterTron pickups, Adjust-O-Matic bridge, Bigsby B6C and Grover Sta-Tite tuners
RRP **£2390**

Duesenberg
Mike Campbell II
In striking metallic red or blue with a white racing stripe, this signature model has a hollow flamed maple body with arched laminated spruce top, a maple neck, rosewood fretboard, two Duesenberg DP90s and a 10dB boost knob
RRP **£2071**


TV Jones Powertrons are linked to a master volume and a master tone

This is no blues machine: it's suited for punky and alt-country rhythm duties through a cranked-up valve amp

tools and techniques used are far more sophisticated than that. This Fano is a case in point. The chips and dings were added before the lacquer checking, so the cracks emanate from and form around them to create a natural and realistic look. An amber coat has gracefully aged the blue lacquer and softened the appearance of the white body binding.

Rather than suspending the pickups from the surround rings, the TV Jones Powertrons are installed, vintage-style, with screws going straight into the wood. A single three-way pickup selector switch is located on the upper horn and the master volume and tone controls have Tele-style metal knobs.

There are so many small and subtle details to admire in the construction of this guitar. For instance, there's the use of blue-tinted pearl marker dots to match the finish, and the lightly aged transfer on the headstock. The neck plate is shaped to match the curve of the neck with an F-shaped cut-out that allows the body finish to show through. The tuners may be old-style Kluson types but the Fano logo is etched onto the back covers, and the wiring of the controls is impeccable. At this price you have a right to demand quality construction, and the GF6 doesn't disappoint... but does it sound as good as it looks? Let's find out.

Sounds

The centre block appears to run along the whole length of the body, but the hollow cavities either side are sizeable. Consequently the GF6 sustains like a solidbody but acoustically it's almost as loud as a fully hollow ES-330. Although hotter wound than vintage-spec Filter'Trons, these TV Jones pickups retain a degree of twang, chime and quack. Combined with the bolt-on neck and alder body, the GF6 has a bright tone with a very lively dynamic response – so anybody imagining that this is a cool ES-335 or Gretsch alternative would be wide of the mark.

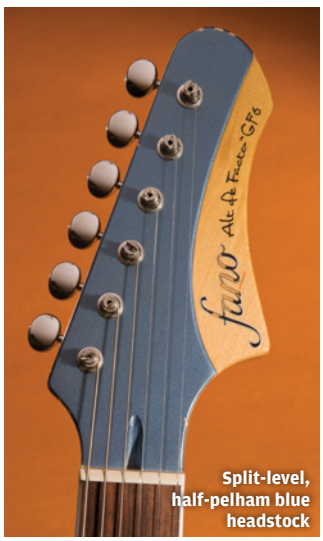
Played clean, the slightly nasal and prominent midrange brings the bridge pickup surprisingly close to a vintage-spec PAF but with better focused lows and extra chime on top. This midrange quality is far less evident from the neck pickup, where the mids sound almost scooped. Once again the clarity is superb, with a noticeably sweeter, more vocal quality. Rolling back the tone control morphs the sound from bell-like chime to woody jazz. The GF6 delivers a raft of usable clean sounds, but fingerstyle players may find that refined playing technique or a compressor pedal will be required to keep things smooth and tame the dynamics.

Moving onto overdriven and distorted tones, it's immediately apparent that the GF6 is no blues machine; the raw and snarling bridge pickup seems far better suited to punky and alt-country style rhythm duties through a cranked-up valve amp. The looks may be retro but the tone certainly isn't, and we enjoyed the way the GF6 can be balanced on the edge of feedback through positioning relative to the amp.

Verdict

So what could make the GF6 even cooler? It's a matter of taste, of course, but a Bigsby B5, a set of PAFs, P90s or even some Gretsch-style Filter'Trons or DeArmonds might do it for you. Fortunately they're all factory options, along with a fantastic selection of colours. The GF6 is an excellent product but since it doesn't try to be all things to all players, it's not a general-purpose guitar or a retro pretender. Successfully combining pawnshop chic, fantastic build quality and modern playability, it's one of those guitars we really don't want to send back.

Stylised f-hole and subtle finish crazing



Split-level, half-pelham blue headstock

Fingerboard radius is flatter than vintage

FINAL SCORE

FANO ALT DE FACTO GF6	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**19**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**15**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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More Bigsby action plus an irresistible combination of the 335's semi-solid construction and the 330's snarly P90s
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Stylised f-holes are a nice touch; other finishes are trans black, natural and sunburst

Engraved pickguard has a thicker bottom white layer, just like a vintage Gibson

The Godin has a sweet core tone, from twinkly with a smooth low end to fat and soulful to a characterful '60s bark

unbranded Kluson-type tuners, might have crossed more than one ocean to end up in sunny Carshalton. Not that this needs to be an issue, of course – it all works fine, which has to be the first priority. Finally, there's just one Volume and one Tone control – you might call this another compromise, or you might call it a welcome bit of streamlining. Those of us who like our guitars simple and don't spend a lot of time twiddling with pickup blends will surely lean towards the latter view.

Sounds

The first ker-chang of an open E chord reveals the Montreal's natural voice to be strong and full, with a forceful midrange. We're not plugged in yet, but so far so good for that aqueduct-like centre block. Before we get carried away with BB King impressions, however, it should be noted that the factory action of our test guitar is distinctly higher than we're used to, at a full 2mm even on the treble side. A few turns of the bridge posts soon bring that down to something more widdle-friendly; this does not expose any uneven fretting or necessitate any adjustments to the neck relief, so we won't be knocking points off. The neck itself has an agreeably 'middle of the road' profile, and is unlikely to be much too thick or much too thin for anyone.

Roller saddles do help with the Bigsby, but the bridge rocks a bit

Going through a clean amp, the first thing to report is the sweetness of this Godin's core tone – especially on the middle pickup setting, which provides all the twinkliness of a classic semi-acoustic and a beautifully smooth and solid low end. The neck pickup on its own is fat and soulful but retains enough edge to assert itself in a band mix, and the bridge 'bucker has plenty of characterful '60s bark. The two controls behave impeccably, with no sudden leaps and no loss of clarity when either or both are backed off.

With moderate overdrive, single notes chub up nicely without losing definition. As is the way with guitars made mostly of air, very high gain can bring the sonic equivalent of drowning in a giant tiramisu – that is to say, a certain amount of mushiness – but stick to the bridge pickup and the Montreal will keep its head out of the goo, maintaining its snappy bite all the way into the land of feedback. Speaking of which, hollowbody howling is certainly not a major issue, arriving only a few notches earlier than it does for an SG with similarly voiced pickups.

The Bigsby does just what you'd expect, which is not a great deal, but sometimes a gentle wobble is all you need to add emotive texture to a decaying note. Anything more aggressive will cause the bridge posts to rock back and forth a fraction – clearly rollers are not an perfect solution to this perennial flaw in the 'Bigsby plus tunomatic' format, but you'd have more trouble with normal, static saddles.

Verdict

Sometimes it can be hard to get pumped about a 'traditional' semi-acoustic. We all know the combination of semi-hollow body, twin humbuckers and Gibson scale-length works, and to an extent we can all have a pretty good guess what it's going to sound like. The differences between a really good semi and a mediocre one are primarily about tonal balance and refinement, and in that respect Godin has whumped its arrows right into the bullseye.

Does the Premiere have the aura of a truly lustable high-end instrument? Maybe not quite. Neck binding, dazzling fretboard inlays and a hard case instead of a padded gigbag would have helped, but all that would have poked a big hole in the 'affordable' part of the deal – and wouldn't have made it sound any more gorgeous than it does. It's expensive by Godin's standards (several of their solidbodies retail close to the £500 mark), but this is still a lot of North American guitar for the money.

FINAL SCORE

GODIN MONTREAL PREMIERE	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**17**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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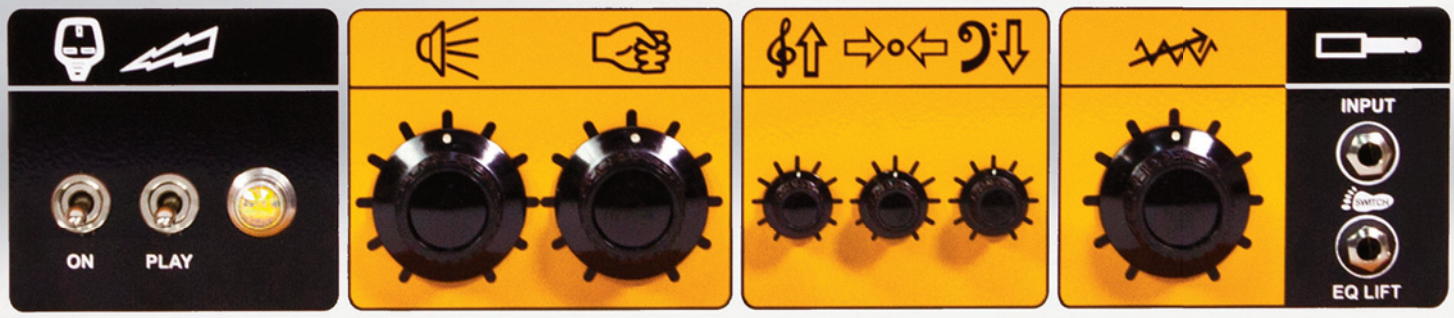

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EASTWOOD
Airline Jupiter Pro Dallas Green Signature

Leading on from the success of its basic Jupiter model, Eastwood pulls out all the stops for a fine signature version. **Marcus Leadley** discovers a unique-sounding instrument

Back in our February 2013 edition (*G&B* 24/05) we got our hands on a very nice Eastwood Airline Jupiter. Riffing on an early '60s theme provided by the Silvertone Jupiter and the Harmony H-49 Stratotone, it wasn't a slavish copy, but it retained enough of the original features to deliver classic pop tones and wiry blues solos.

Now we have an uprated version to consider: the Jupiter Pro Dallas Green signature. Dallas Green is a Canadian singer/guitarist, ex-Alexisonfire and now with City And Colour, and his special model is not that dissimilar to the Airline Pro, so if you like what you see you can save yourself a quick £120; that's the price for the luscious black option, which itself looks pretty smart.

Still, this honeyburst version with its tortoiseshell pickguard is a real looker, and to our eyes it nails the vintage look more than any other version of the Jupiter. In the flesh the colours are more muted than the marketing images suggest, with an overall effect not unlike a Hofner finish, with the deep rich brown stain that covers the back and the back of the neck grading to a sweet sunburst on the top. As with the basic Jupiter, the top is maple while the back and sides are mahogany; however, while the base model has a bolt-on neck and a wooden adjustable bridge, much like the original '60s Jupiter, this Dallas Green Pro version has more of a focus on contemporary performance with a set neck and a chrome tunomatic bridge with a sculptural jazz-style trapeze tailpiece. The maple neck with its bound rosewood fingerboard has a slightly shorter scale length (25.5" as opposed to 26") and it's decidedly more chunky than that of the basic model – more '50s, in a way, with less of a taper. The neck has a nice, wide C profile and feels remarkably like an acoustic guitar neck. It's a feel that will please some players immensely. Overall, the changes to the instrument's construction and hardware lift the weight from 7lbs to 8lbs. It doesn't sound like much, but the difference is noticeable on the strap.

The Dallas Green model features the same Airline Argyle single-coil pickups as the Jupiter and Jupiter Pro models so we can still anticipate ➔

This Dallas Green version gets a set neck and a shorter scale

The nut isn't too narrow – 46.2mm, or a shade over 1 11/16"

FACTFILE
EASTWOOD AIRLINE JUPITER PRO DALLAS GREEN SIGNATURE

DESCRIPTION **Thinline hollow body electric guitar. Made in Korea**
PRICE **£799**

BUILD **Maple top and back, mahogany sides, set maple neck with bound rosewood fingerboard. Tunomatic bridge with trapeze tailpiece. Vintage style chrome hardware and Grover-style tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two Airline Vintage Argyle Diamond single coil pickups, independent master tone and volume controls, three-way vintage flipper pickup selector and tone blender pickup control**
LEFT-HANDERS **Not yet**
FINISH **Honeyburst (basic Jupiter Pro comes in metallic black for £679)**

SCALE LENGTH
648mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43.2mm
12th fret 53.1mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 22.2mm
12th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35mm
Bridge 51mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 2.5mm
WEIGHT **3.64kg/8lbs**

CONTACT **Eastwood Guitars**
(+44) 07791551708
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H49 Jupiter Stratotone
Fancy the Harmony-branded model? A Chinese-made replica of the original is now back in production
RRP **$650**

Italia
Fiorano Standard
More vintage-style fun from this hollow, single-f-hole double-cut guitar with two P90-style single coils and a maple set neck with rosewood fingerboard
RRP **£549**

Airline
Tuxedo
Another hollowbody based on a vintage design, this time the Barney Kessel Airline/Kay model. Set neck with tunomatic bridge and P90 style single coil pickups. Sweet!
RRP **£679**

The Argyle pickups are single-coil but surprisingly hum-free

The Dallas Green Pro excels at grungy rhythm, massive riffs, solid electric blues/rock and crazy sound sculpting

a nostalgic sound with a bright top end. Surprisingly, given the Dallas Green's contemporary makeover, the original '60s-style pickup blend control has been reinstated. This is in addition to the independent tone and volume controls, and it allows you to mix up a lot more tone variations from the basic twin pickup configuration. There's a three-position plastic-topped flipper-style pickup selector switch, which gives a bit more vintage fun.

Sounds

Unplugged, the Dallas Green model is really bright and zingy. It naturally sustains well – better than the version we saw previously – and the tonal response is very even and open. It's fairly loud, and while you don't get the same sense of acoustic character you get from a semi-acoustic with open f-holes, there's some honky resonance that reflects the void in the body.

In this version of the Jupiter the Argyle pickups retain their clarity and brightness but the tone is richer and more percussive, which suggest they are very good at picking up an instrument's natural character. Based on alnico magnets, these pickups have an overall character with a decidedly retro flavour, but there's a lot more flexibility than that on offer. The twangy rock'n'roll/country credentials of the basic Jupiter are great, but we found the sound became choked with too much distortion; here, though, you have a practical guitar that feels as if it's a more capable performer over a much wider territory. Basic chords ring out beautifully, making it an ideal singer-songwriter guitar, and all three pickup settings can be used to good effect.

The Dallas Green's clean tones are great for melody and improvising – although the Jupiter's inherent twanginess continues to defeat the easy production of a mellow jazz comping sound. The best option for this is a bit of tone roll-off using the blend control. In the early day of electric guitar design many makers tried various passive switch combinations to help players get flexibility from basic low-wattage single channel valve amps. Most guitar techs now refer to these as 'mud switches' as they usually subtract something from the basic output, and yes, the tonal sweep here is pretty drastic... so much so that you can create a wah-type effect quite easily. This is actually a very usable and expressive tool, and the knob is well-placed so you can operate it with your little pinkie. However, anything more than a tiny twist of the knob takes you off down a long dark corridor of brown soupy sounds – there's an almost infinite variety, mind you, so if you want to experiment with layering lower-mid tones you'll be in heaven. I'm not saying this couldn't be creative, but I'm kind of guessing most players will find dust gathering around this particular control knob.

Moving on to higher gain sounds the Dallas Green proves to be an exciting performer. Listening to Green's Colour And City albums, you get a sense of his passion for combining open acoustic-style clean chords with incredible nuanced distorted guitar layers – and this is exactly what the Jupiter Pro can provide. You can manipulate the basis hi-fi output very easily and the instrument doesn't really sound like any other specific guitar, so it's quite easy to create your own signature palate of tones. We wouldn't suggest this as a go-to instrument for wailing lead solos, but it really excels at grungy rhythm work, massive riffs, solid electric blues/rock sounds and crazy sound sculpting.

Quick volume tweaks are a bit tricky as the blend knob takes pole position nearest the bridge

Verdict

This is a hugely likeable guitar that could be ideal for someone who likes vintage style and sounds but doesn't want to be too constrained by the limitations that a true vintage instrument can impose. There are reasons why certain classic Fender and Gibson designs became triumphs of player popularity while other brands and models became trapped in their eras, and today's amps and computer-based recording solutions let you explore these vintage quirks and find new possibilities. What you get with the Jupiter Pro Dallas Green is a pleasing combination of lovely rich, acoustic sounding clean tones, great mid-drive sustain/distortion characteristics, and a slightly limited high-gain lead palette. Depending on your style and tastes, however, the Jupiter Pro – or this signature model – could totally hit the nail on the head for you. This guitar is almost exactly double the price of the most basic Jupiter model, though, so if the vibe takes your fancy and you're a bit more rock'n'roll oriented, do play both when considering a purchase.

FINAL SCORE

EASTWOOD AIRLINE JUPITER PRO DALLAS GREEN SIGNATURE

Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

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Guitar amplifiers

HAYDEN
Dual MoFo 15 Combo

Hayden claims their new two-channel combo proves that huge tone and versatility can be found in small packages. **Huw Price** sets out to find if that's the case

Hayden made a bit of a splash last year with a line of MoFo valve heads, and this month we're reviewing one of the eagerly anticipated MoFo combos. In keeping with the original theme, the circuitry is all-valve, it looks fantastic, and it remains very affordable indeed.

Although a relatively straightforward amp, the Dual MoFo 15 has some features that are not present on the head version. For starters, the combo has two channels rather than one – hence the Dual part. There's also reverb, but rather than complicate things with a spring tank and extra gain stages, Hayden has opted to go digital.

The control layout is familiar territory, with no compromises. Each channel has gain and master volume complete with independent sets of Bass, Middle and Treble controls. The Dual MoFo 15 also ships with a sturdy metal footswitch for channel-swapping and a generous length of cable to reach the socket on the rear of the amp.

The cabinet is made from birch ply and finished in a two-tone 'Bronco' tolex with a real leather carry handle. White piping matches the control knobs and antique enthusiasts may be interested to learn the grille is a Lloyd Loom style material. The fit and finish are impressive and should stay looking that way thanks to metal corner protectors.

The cabinet is open backed and contains a 12" custom Hayden speaker. It's rated at 16 Ohms but an additional 8 Ohm output provides scope for external speaker cabinets and potential speaker upgrades. The amp chassis is suspended from the top of the cabinet, Fender style, with the valves pointing downwards. We counted a pair of ➔➔

Extension cab facility boosts your options

15W of power from a pair of EL84 valves

The all-valve Dual MoFo 15 has two channels rather than the head version's one and comes with digital reverb

FACTFILE
HAYDEN DUAL MOFO 15 COMBO

DESCRIPTION **Twin-channel 15W valve combo with digital reverb, silent channel switching footswitch, 12" speaker and 8 Ohm extension socket. Made in China**
PRICE **£499**

CONTROLS **Gain, master volume, Bass, Middle, Treble (both channels), reverb (shared)**
VALVES **12AX7, 2 x EL84**
DIMENSIONS **50cm wide, 44cm high, 29cm deep**
WEIGHT **18kg/39.6lbs**

CONTACT **Hayden Amps 01245 441155 www.haydenamps.com**

Like this? Try this...

Fender
Blues Junior III
15W combo with 12AX7s and two EL84, 12" Fender Lightning Bolt by Eminence speaker, external speaker output, one channel. Controls are volume, reverb, master, Mid, Bass, Treble and Fat switch
RRP **£464.11**

Vox
AC15 C1 CR
15W valve combo with a 12" Celestion Creamback speaker, three 12AX7s, two EL84s, Normal and Top Boost channels, control for volume, treble, bass, reverb, tremolo (speed and depth), and a footswitch
RRP **£541**

Laney
TI15-112
Tony Iommi Signature Backstage model with 15W, two EL84s, three ECC83s, 1W input option for cranked power valve tones at low volume, 12" HH speaker, one hi-gain 'Iommi' channel, switchable pre-boost, speaker Silent and Live Record Out options and MP3 input
RRP **£347**

Identical controls – and very similar sounds – for each of the two channels

The Dual MoFo is quick to overdrive and has a British tone with plenty of crunch, aggression and upper midrange

EL84 power valves with spring retainers and a 12AX7. Since the signal path of the two channels is said to be different, Hayden has done well to achieve such versatility with a single preamp valve.

There is a fourth valve that serves no sonic purpose: mounted behind the front panel and protected by wire mesh, there's a 'Magic Eye' that winks at you while you are playing. It's actually a miniature cathode ray tube that was used in thermionic radio sets as a tuning indicator; Selmer used them to display tremolo speed in some amps.

Sounds

We started with all the controls set at 12 o'clock to determine how each channel is voiced. It's immediately apparent that the Dual MoFo 15 doesn't really have 'clean' and 'dirty' channels, or even 'overdrive' and 'crunch'. Besides a hint of extra smoothness from Channel 1 and a bit more mid-scoop from Channel 2, both sound very similar indeed... so it's about variations on a single theme rather than covering all bases.

Internal speaker suits the amp but it isn't the loudest

Fortunately it is a very enjoyable theme, and plugging in a Les Paul demonstrated that Channel 2 has a fraction more clean headroom. Even so, the Dual MoFo 15 is quick to overdrive and not really capable of loud clean tones, especially with humbucker-equipped guitars.

Overall the MoFo's tonality is on the bright side, and this becomes more apparent as gain levels are increased. The usual solution would be to roll back the Treble control, but on Channel 2 we found it behaved in a fairly unpredictable way that had a knock-on effect with midrange and gain.

At the top of its range there's more than enough treble edge for even the darkest humbuckers. As you roll the tone control back, the midrange response appears to shift through various resonance frequencies. There are a couple of hot spots around one and 10 o'clock where the sound firstly hollows out, then beefs back up. Counter-intuitively, the tone starts to thin out once again as the Treble control nears the bottom of its range. We experienced a similar array of midrange hot spots with Channel 1's Treble control, but things were more predictable here and the control remained useful across its whole range. You simply have to experiment with the controls to get a feel for the way they behave and interact.

Both channels go from clean (ish) to a full-throated overdrive within the first quarter of the Gain control's range, and from there the distortion continues to build. To our ears it's a discernibly British-style tone with plenty of crunch, aggression and upper-midrange harmonic content. If you're primarily a heavy rock player, this is the type of valve distortion which will be right up your street – and there's plenty of clarity and definition even when things are really crunchy.

However, those who prefer their overdrive a little smoother and sweeter might find the tone a bit too ice-picky, and there's an edgy and slightly fizzy quality to the overdrive that doesn't exactly tick the 'retro' box. Thinking this might be attributable to the speaker, we tried plugging the Dual MoFo 15 into an external cab loaded with a Celestion G12M greenback. This demonstrated that the speaker is a decent match for this circuit, but it is relatively inefficient.

Verdict

The speaker and limited degree of clean headroom would make the Dual MoFo a tad marginal as a gigging amp for some players, and we also found the reverb a bit underwhelming; it has a warm and vaguely springy quality, but remains fairly subtle unless the reverb control is turned towards maximum. Even so, this amp produces a fine blues-rock breakup and it's a fairly versatile device for the money. Hayden's stated aim was to shoehorn two MoFo 15 heads into a single box with silent switching between the channels, and in that regard they have definitely succeeded.

FINAL SCORE

HAYDEN DUAL MOFO 15 COMBO	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Versatility	**16**/20
Sound	**16**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**85%**

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LINE 6
Amplifi 150

Bluetooth streaming, multiple speakers, a zillion sounds stored in the cloud to make your own: Line 6's latest device makes a startling bid to change the world of guitar amps. Review by **Martyn Casserly**

Sometimes you come across an idea that's so staring-you-in-the-face-obvious, you wonder how no one has ever thought of it before. Line 6's Amplifi range is just such a thing, combining a guitar amp with the capability to stream audio wirelessly from other digital devices.

There have been plenty of practice amps over the years that could play music from your stereo or iPod if you plugged them in, but they all had the same problem. Whereas Sony or Denon might design their music systems to fit with the look of a modern home, most amp manufacturers have no such aesthetics in mind. This meant if you wanted to use the considerable grunt that your 30-watter offered to blast out Pink Floyd at neighbour-irritating volumes, it would involve a dirty great black box sitting in your living room, usually adorned with shiny metal or bulbous plastic edges, a row of dials, and some lead plugged into the top of it and trailing off towards your hi-fi. Not really ideal.

The Amplifi 150 is completely different. The design itself is arguably the smartest we've ever seen on an amp. Minimalism replaces the gaudy efforts that have gone before, with the square metal grill that surrounds the front and sides being elegant while still retaining a sense of power. A two-tone cloth is ensconced beneath, with the black and red hues separated by a discrete silver band. It looks more akin to a Bowers & Wilkins speaker than a guitar amp. Even the sunken control panel is understated, acting as a built in carry handle while also containing six small, black control knobs for the EQ, drive, and effects, with a larger one for volume and (when depressed) blending the signals between guitar and anything sent via Bluetooth.

Headphones socket, Aux In for MP3 player, floorboard socket and USB port

Dual-purpose volume pot and blender for guitar/aux signal

This last part is what makes the Amplifi 150 so compelling. Built into the rig is a Bluetooth receiver that allows you to pair the amp with your mobile phone, tablet, or computer to stream audio from your collection without the need for cumbersome leads. It sounds great, too, thanks to a specially designed speaker layout that includes a 12" custom Celestion speaker, plus two high and two mid-frequency drivers. This allows the amp to separate signals into clean and effected ones, giving you a wet/dry stereo output from a ➔

FACTFILE
LINE 6 AMPLIFI 150

DESCRIPTION **150W 1x12" modelling combo with four high and mid frequency drivers and Bluetooth capabilities**
PRICE **£395**

CONTROLS **Drive, Bass, Mid, Treble, FX, Reverb, Volume/Blend, Patch selector, Tap Tempo, Bluetooth pairing button**
AMP MODES **Four onboard presets with lots more via the iOS Amplifi app**
CONNECTIONS **¼" Input jack, ¼" headphone jack, 3.5mm Aux in, FBV Pedal input, USB**
DIMENSIONS **16.25" high, 22.5" wide, 9.5" deep**
WEIGHT **16.2kg/35.6lbs**

CONTACT **Line 6**
01788 566 566
www.line6.com

Like this? Try this...

Yamaha
THR10X
While not being Bluetooth enabled this little amp can sit on a shelf without looking odd, features hi-fi style speakers, and delivers some very impressive sounds. Plays your music via a 3.5mm lead too
RRP **£299**

Roland
Cube 40GX
It might be chunky compared to the Amplifi's smooth lines, but the Cube is an excellent live and home amp with plenty of good sounds on tap
RRP **£235**

Vox
AC4C1
If having a cool-looking amp in your front room is high on your priorities then the AC4C1 is just about a pretty as they come – and it sounds pretty bloomin' marvellous, too
RRP **£299**

Regular guitar amp controls and EQ

The simple idea behind the Amplifi is genius, but functionality is crippled without an expensive iOS device

single cab; very nice. Streaming is solid on iOS but Android did suffer a few glitches that we hope get ironed out soon via some driver updates.

Playing along with your favourite songs is easy; just hold down the Bluetooth button positioned next to the control panel, look for the amp on your device, then once they're connected you can control the tracks remotely. The Amplifi comes loaded with just four presets, which is considerably less than we've grown accustomed to over the years, but of course there are hundreds of options available through the Line 6 software. This, though, is where we hit the major snag in the system.

If you've got an iOS 7 device then the Amplifi app presents a huge choice of amp sims, cabinets and FX

To get anything like the kind of performance you'd expect from a modern practice/performance amp you're going to need an iOS device such as the iPod Touch, iPhone, or iPad. It also needs to be running iOS 7, so that rules out the first generation iPad models. If you have got one then it turns the Amplifi into an excellent, fully-featured monster, but if Android or Windows Phone are your platforms of choice this is going to be a hard sell until a relevant app is released. Android is now so strong in the technology marketplace that this policy of iOS-only seems unnecessarily restrictive, and we'd like to see it addressed quickly.

With the iOS app installed you gain access to over 70 amps, 100-plus effects, and a live editor so you can control your amp settings from your phone or tablet. There are also cool features such as tone matching, which will analyse a track that's playing and search for guitar tones that match it. These are drawn from the huge library online that has been created by Line 6 and users from around the world. You can even create one yourself and upload it via the app so that others can share in your brilliance.

Sounds

In the end this is still primarily a guitar amp, so it needs to be able to cut it when you plug in, and thankfully that's not a problem. As you might expect from Line 6 there is plenty of good tone on offer, with the real gold found once you start tweaking the settings to get closer to that sound in your head. The 12" speaker gives a glowing account of itself, with decent levels of body and clarity, and the additional drivers help keep a balanced sound when you jam along to tracks. Edgy blues sting nicely, classic rock tones are beefy once you've found the sweet spot, and heavier distorted tones relay the required fizz.

The four presets are a good mix of heavy and clean, but you wouldn't want to rely on those alone. You can program or download new ones to replace them though, so if you think four is all you need then this could be ideal (just remember that you'll need an FBV MkII foot controller to swap channels on the fly). Volume is a little loud for the home unless you set it very low, but as this is a digital amp that doesn't really affect the tone quality that much.

Gigging is definitely on the menu, but in a weird way you might not want to take the Amplifi out, as scratches would spoil the smart styling. This makes us wonder whether a 30W option, rather than the current 75 or 150 ones on offer, would be a better choice.

Verdict

The simple idea behind the Amplifi is genius. Having a dual-purpose amp could save you money on a hi-fi system while giving you an excellent rig to play through in the home or on the road. The iOS caveat is a large one though, with the functionality being severely crippled without one of those expensive Apple devices on hand. Still, if you have the equipment already then the Line 6 Amplifi is a hugely impressive way to put it to good use.

FINAL SCORE

LINE 6 AMPLIFI 150	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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ROTOSOUND

Wobbler Tremolo, Crusader Chorus, King Henry Phaser & Aftermath Analog Delay

Handwired in glorious Sidcup, the very bosom of rock'n'roll, these new stompboxes add swoosh, warble, throb and echo to the Rotosound pedal line. Review by **Marcus Leadley**

Rotosound is one of those great British brands. For the most part the company has stuck to its business of being an innovative maker of music strings, but back in the '60s they also marketed various rebadged versions of Sola Sound Tone Bender fuzzes, with the MkIII seeing the light of day once again as a handwired reissue in 2011. Even then the rumour mill was grinding about the idea of possible 'new' pedals; well, Jason How and the gang have gone and done it, with not just one or two, but six of the beasts. This month we'll be looking at four, but no doubt the Pusher Compressor and Leveller EQ will be cabled up some time soon.

All the new Rotosound pedals are built into the same rugged steel housing that was created for the reissue fuzz. These are chunky pedals in terms of footprint – fine in that old-school way where you have one or two stompboxes on the floor, not so great if you want to incorporate several onto your pedalboard. You might expect to find a lot of free air inside, but the well laid-out circuit boards take up most of the space. Although changing the battery means removing the base plate, there's a 9V power port on the front of each unit – not something you'd ever find on an old germanium fuzz. Although these pedals are vintage-styled and vintage-voiced they are not copies of pre-existing circuits; John Oram's designs combine the best of both new and old. Each pedal is finished in a solid, bright colour, so they're easy to distinguish, and each pedal has exactly three knobs... so not too many parameters to get hung up on.

Though vintage-styed and vintage-voiced, these Rotosound pedals aim to combine the best of both new and old

Wobbler Tremolo

Everyone needs a good tremolo. While the amplitude modulation of an incoming signal sounds like a simple proposition, tremolo can be a subtle or vicious tool, adding rhythm and movement to otherwise static chords. Entire cycling riffs can be built around the right pulsation and different circuits have distinct characteristics.

The best tremolos can be finely adjusted, and this one is very musical. As well as Rate and Depth controls you can click between silicon and germanium circuits using the Silly/Germ knob. One quirk is the fact that in bypass mode the LED glows solid red, but when the tremolo is engaged it pulses in step to the speed. This is useful, telling you you're in the right zone before you start to tweak by ear.

FINAL SCORE

WOBBLER TREMOLO	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**89%**

King Henry Phaser

The phaser is another one of those effects that defines a classic guitar sound, this time of the late '70s and '80s – think the Cure and Eddie Van Halen. Phaser modulation is created by splitting the guitar signal in two, filtering one side and letting frequency-dependent phase cancellation shake the voodoo stick. Working the Rate ➔

The knobs offer just the right amount of resistance and interact very intuitively. With Depth set at about 12 o'clock, the Rate control allows you to go from a lazy sweep to a cat-like purr. Wound fully anticlockwise, the effect is completely muted; fully clockwise it gets a little seasick – so you have plenty of scope in between these extremes. At the Silly end of the circuit control the overall sound character is more glassy and clear, at the Germ end there's more rounded midrange saturation and a slight gain boost.

FACTFILE

WOBBLER TREMOLO

DESCRIPTION **Tremolo pedal. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£179.95**

FEATURES **Rate, Depth, Silly/Germ controls; takes internal 9v battery or external 9v power**

KING HENRY PHASER

DESCRIPTION **Tremolo pedal. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£179.95**

FEATURES **Rate, Depth, Peak controls; battery or external power**

CRUSADER CHORUS

DESCRIPTION **Chorus pedal. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£179.95**

FEATURES **Rate, Depth, Level knobs; battery or external power**

AFTERMATH ANALOG DELAY

DESCRIPTION **Delay pedal. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£199.95**

FEATURES **Depth, Rate, Feedback knobs; battery or external power**

CONTACT **Rotosound**
01732 450838
www.rotosound.com

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RRP **£179**

control with Depth set fairly low does give you an effect that sounds a lot like tremolo, but a little more rounded to the ear. At higher Depth settings this takes on a slightly 'mouthy' wah-like characteristic which can be accentuated by driving the Peak control, and at max the effect is not dissimilar to auto wah. Increasding the Peak setting at lower Depth settings creates a superbly chewy sound that's great for funk rhythm. With a high gain amp and plenty of Peak the pedal sounds great with singing high lead runs and big chunky chords, while driving a clipped amp delivers great New Wave tones.

Crusader Chorus

This time we have Rate, Depth and Level controls. Level is the interesting one: it lets you have more or less of the effected signal added to your basic sound, allowing you to make good use of the more out-there sounds created by higher Rate and Depth settings by just adding fractions to the overall mix, making the sound burble and rumble in ways that don't sound at all like chorus-effected guitar. People talk of chorus as sounding a bit like a 12-string; that's not far from reality, as the effect is again created by splitting the input signal and then applying a very short delay and a low-frequency oscillator to one side. As the delay's so short the overall output blends together, giving a subtle pitch shift. The Crusader performs well at the more reserved end of the spectrum, where it delivers rich, clean results. It's mono, of course, but that's appropriate for most guitar applications, as generally you want the overall signal to stay together in the mix.

Aftermath Analog Delay

Unlike digital delays that combine a sampling capability with a playback buffer and can therefore offer a perfect facsimile of the original event, the echo created by an analogue circuit is subject to degradation of both signal and tone – and the results can sound fantastic. You won't get especially long delays with analogue kit; there are limitations to bucket brigade technology, which shuttles the signal along lines of capacitors in step to a clock signal, but the combination of a short delay, tonal degradation and a variable feedback capability can give you awesome results. At lower Depth and Speed settings the Rotosounds gives beautifully warm repeats, and you can use the Feedback to give you a single repeat, or six, eight or more, or dial on through to near-infinite pulsations. Push Feedback to the limit, max out the Rate and let the sonic equivalent of a storm build before you use the Rate again to crash the pitch into a wall; lovely. Used more conservatively the Aftermath is great for lead playing, or you can match the repeat level with your guitar output and sculpt hypnotic riffs.

Verdict

These very retro-looking pedals will suit players who have got over the appeal of having every option at their feet and prefer to settle for a few well-chosen sounds. They're not cheap, but neither are they cruising the silly price bracket of some boutique offerings. The workmanship is solid, the components are high-grade, and they're likely to deliver years of good service. While they may all be single-function devices, all the controls are well thought-out and the blend of limitation and flexibility is musically very appealing.

FINAL SCORE

KING HENRY PHASER	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**17**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

FINAL SCORE

CRUSADER CHORUS	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**17**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**87%**

FINAL SCORE

AFTERMATH ANALOG DELAY PEDAL	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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TWINSTOMP
OD-Boost Deluxe

A healthy boost, a fine overdrive, or both together: the OD-Boost is a handsome and well-designed live tool. Review by **Richard Purvis**

Goodness knows what TwinStomp will do if they ever feel the need to build a box with three footswitches. Launch a sub-brand called TripletStomp? Luckily, since scooping the *Guitar & Bass* Pedal Of The Year title back in 2008 with the sturdy little Booster, this British boutique maker seems to be doing just fine with the two-way format. The roster now includes a dual overdrive, and it can't have hurt anyone's brain too much to come up with the idea of putting one overdrive and one clean boost in the same box – thus the OD-Boost. Don't get too hung up on the 'Deluxe' part, mind: this refers only to the polished steel casing, and the slightly cheaper Standard version is identical on the inside.

The mirror-like finish of the OD-Boost Deluxe is luscious, though, and will surely remind many players of that other high-end UK tone-peddler (and pedaller), Dickinson Amps. The overdrive section is on the left, with controls for Drive, Tone and Level, while its partner on the right has a simple oversized Boost dial ranging from 5dB to 22dB. In between there's an on/off switch, which is not something we've seen on many stompboxes. It allows the pedal to be bypassed and disconnected from the battery without physically unplugging anything – a potentially handy juice-saving feature.

On the subject of batteries, yes, that is an actual keyring on a cable-tie sticking out of the front. It might look worryingly knocked-up-in-the-shed, but this is in fact a rather innovative way of making a PP3 easy to put in and even easier to pull out again, which – as we only have 500 words to play with in this review – is best understood by trying it out for yourself.

Sounds

A clean boost should make your guitar sound like itself but louder, and that's what this one does. Bottom of the dial is a subtle, uncoloured lift; top of the dial is an iron fist across the chops. Boosters are perhaps at their best when plugged into a valve amp already somewhere in the murky zone between clean and overdriven; in this case the TwinStomp will bully it right into the dirt, effectively adding a new channel.

The other half of the pedal is no less impressive, offering smooth, transparent overdrive with no beefing-up to flatter the tone and just the merest hint of a Tube Screamer-style mids hump. It's super-delicate at low gain, keeping your dynamics intact right down to the lightest scratch of the pick. Turn up the Drive for tight, Marshall-y power chords and aggressive lead lines; combine with the booster to make your drummer run out of the room in tears.

Verdict

This is arguably the most useful pedal TwinStomp has made yet, offering two distinct effects that sound great individually and work fiendishly well together. I'm not quite convinced by the on/off toggle switch – stomp on one of the footswitches without realising this is in the 'off' position and your bypass signal will be rudely silenced – but it's great to see a British manufacturer turning fresh ideas into well-made, superb-sounding stompboxes.

FINAL SCORE

TWINSTOMP OD-BOOST DELUXE	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**92%**

FACTFILE
TwinStomp OD-Boost Deluxe

DESCRIPTION **Combined overdrive and clean boost pedal. Made in UK**
RRP **£225**
(standard version £195)

CONTROLS **Drive, Tone and Level for overdrive; On/off toggle switch; Boost control**

CONTACT **TwinStomp**
01746 780984
www.twinstomp.com

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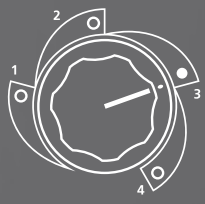

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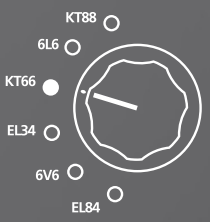

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HUSS & DALTON
Crossroads Deluxe

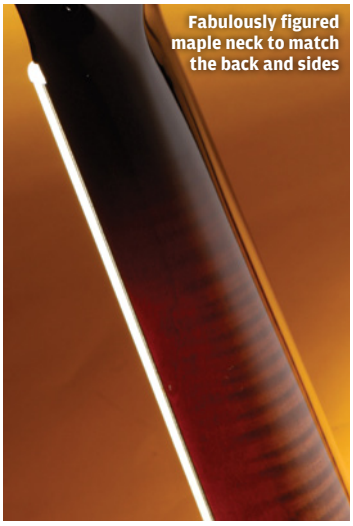
Smaller-bodied guitars are on many players' radars right now, and blues freaks and fingerpickers will be keen to lay hands on this Virginia company's tribute to a prewar Gibson. Review by **Rick Batey**

Gibsons of the 1930s have a reputation of being some of the most difficult guitars to emulate. Lightly built and lightly braced, with fabulous timber plus 70-plus years of age behind them, they have a thunk, a honk, a sweet, open quality that almost defies cloning. Many companies have tried, though, and many still do, as there are few guitars that thrill fingerpicking hipsters more than a prewar-style Gibson.

Authentic-sounding repros of the smaller-bodied models are particularly hard to find. Gibson has come fairly close at times with the True Vintage line, while the cream of small-shop makers all offer their own interpretations: Collings (the C-10), Santa Cruz (the H), Kevin Kopp (the L-02), John Walker (the Lolo Creek), Blazer & Henkes (the Santa Fe), plus Dale Fairbanks, David Flammang, and so on (there's an hour of happy googling for you). Or, you can buy a Pacific Rim lookalike... which might look okay but won't, in our opinion, even come close.

Huss & Dalton hail from Staunton, Virginia and though their profile might not be as high as a couple of the brands mentioned above, they're very well thought of. We've played a slope dread of theirs which was damn fine, and an 'aged' D-18 which blew our socks off.

Plastic-buttoned Gotohs add a nice touch of old-time spirit



Fabulously figured maple neck to match the back and sides

With flamed maple back, sides and neck and a deeper body, this Deluxe version is close to a vintage Gibson Nick Lucas

The standard Crossroads is pretty much a Gibson L-00 tribute – a mahogany/sitka guitar with minimal decoration, 4 5/16" deep in the body. This is the Crossroads Deluxe, with maple back, sides and neck, more ornate and very slightly deeper in the body, bringing it closer to the upmarket maple Gibson Nick Lucas of 1934-1941.

Pop open the case – a lovely, tightly-shaped tweed item – and the Crossroads' sunburst makes a big first impression. It's modelled after the Gibson pattern, but the small centre patch's colour is different: less yellow, more hollow... almost pinkish. Lift the guitar out (it's very, very lightweight) and you can see that sunbursting ➔

FACTFILE
Huss & Dalton Crossroads Deluxe

DESCRIPTION
Folk-sized acoustic guitar. Made in the US
PRICE **£3999 inc. hard case**

BUILD **Solid sitka spruce top with scalloped Adirondack-bracing, solid flamed maple back and sides, ivoroid binding. Ivoroid-bound flamed maple neck with 19-fret rosewood fingerboard. Rosewood bridge with bone saddle, bone nut, Gotoh TK-0700 machineheads**
LEFT-HANDERS **Yes, to order**
FINISH **All-gloss**

SCALE LENGTH
630mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 44.5mm
12th fret 56mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21mm
10th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 38mm
Bridge 58.5mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 3.0mm
12th fret bass 4.0mm
WEIGHT **1.72kg/3.8lbs**

CONTACT **Brilliant Distribution**
01425 480595
www.hussanddalton.com

Like this? Try this...

Collings
C-10DLXSB
This Gibson-inspired, Texas-made rosewood-body picker is terrifyingly well-made and adds a crisp yet luxurious tonality to the L-00 design. The large options list allows maple back/sides, deep body, a wider nut, or a cutaway
RRP **approx £4165**

Santa Cruz
H-13
Generally lighter than a Collings with a warmer vibe, SCGC's Gibson-type interpretation chooses the rare 13th-fret neck format with considerable success. Again, a wide choice of woods, neck widths, and more: world-class stuff
RRP **approx £3899**

Rosewood no-belly bridge with ebony pins and a compensated bone drop-in saddle

The Crossroads Deluxe is a masterfully-made guitar with a super-tasteful design and a crisp, dynamic sound

has been subtly applied to the back, sides, neck, even the rear and sides of the headstock. It's a beautiful job, thin enough to show a hint of texture on the tightly-grained sitka top and the imprint of the figured ripple on the back.

Talking of maple, the timber chosen for the back, sides and neck is perfectly matched and very tightly flamed: this is AAA-grade stuff, and nicely set off by vintage-shallow ivoroid binding around top and back, and the fingerboard too, while the simple matching soundhole rosette echoes the model's Kalamazoo-made origins. Rosewood is the choice for both the fingerboard – decorated by simple dot markers, and terminating the authentic distance from the soundhole – and the bridge, a straight, no-belly item with countersunk bridge pins with abalone inserts and a polished, hand-compensated bone saddle.

With this H&D, the closer you look, the more the fine details appear. Pop a mirror inside and you can see the smoothly scalloped bracing of stiff red spruce, some fine mahogany kerfing and a small rosewood bridgeplate; even the label has been attached to the neckblock so as not to spoil the glimpse of flamed maple through the soundhole. The pickguard is L-00-shaped (but not firestriped in pattern, which would have been tasty). Up at the headstock, the trussrod cover is a little piece of ebony, the pearl H&D logo is small and subtle, and the tuners, rather than being some gold-plated modern types which would look very out of place, are plain but effective three-on-a-plate Kluson-alike Gotohs with cream plastic buttons.

The Crossroads' scale length is the proper 24.75", while the neck is 1.75" at the nut, with a string spacing at the bridge of 58mm, or a shade under 2 5/16". The neck is a medium slim soft vee, tapered to thicken up past the ninth fret, and topped with narrow-gauge frets: it's faster and more comfy than the majority of vintage necks of the '30s, and a pleasure to get around on. However our guitar displays a noticeably high action, presumably so that your kind dealer can set it to your preference? It's 3mm at the 12th fret on the top E and 4mm on the low E, and though there's plenty of room for adjustment with a full 4mm of saddle at the bridge, this action would be considered tall for most fingerpickers.

Simple rosette and L-00 style pickguard

Ivoroid heel cap matches the shallow body binding

Sounds

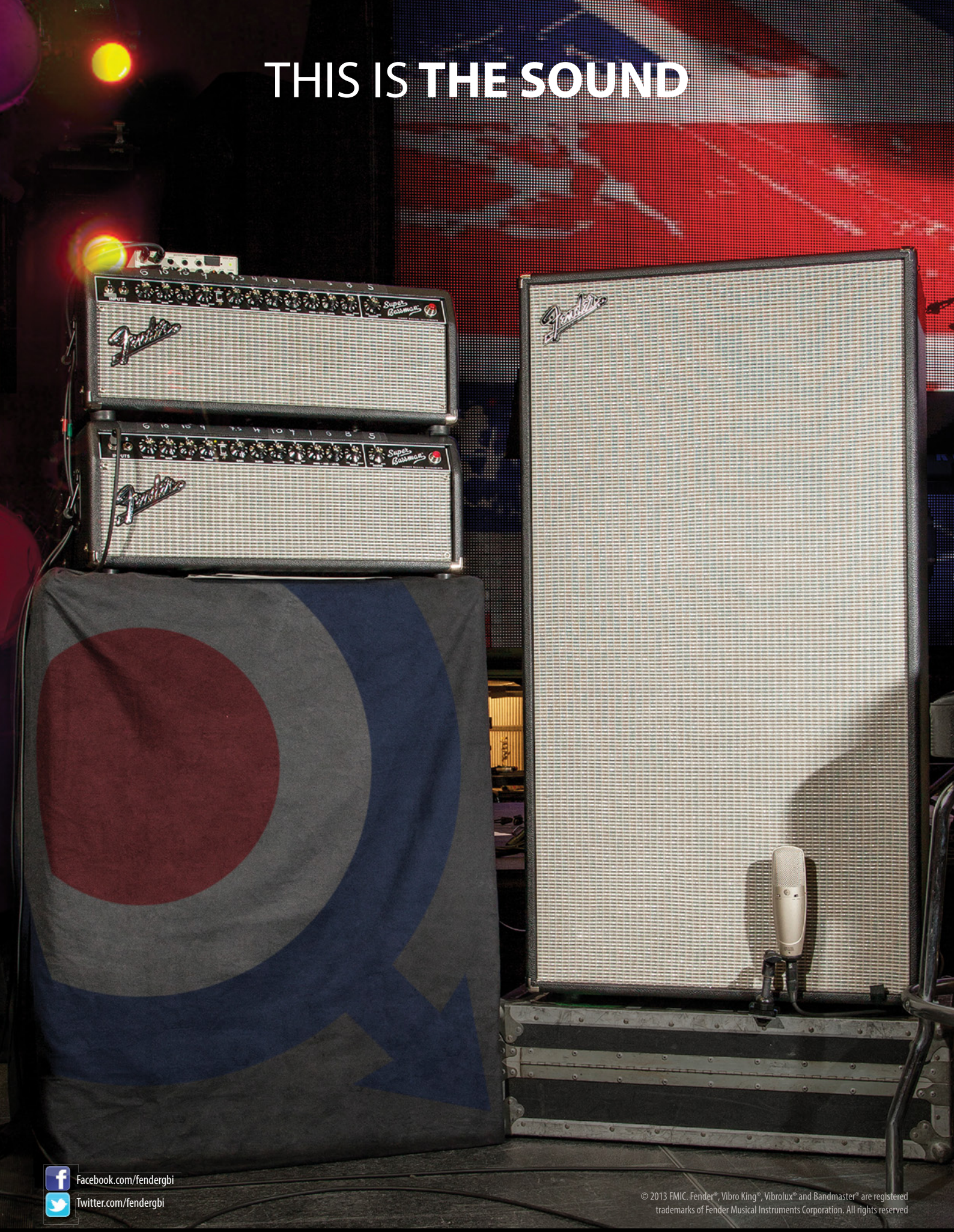
Maple has the reputation of sounding hard and bright, and though older guitars like Nick Lucases and Centurys can belie those preconceptions the brand-new H&D hasn't yet had time to upset the apple cart – yet it's already promisingly open and responsive. The mids in particular jump out willingly from a pick, while the bottom E is tight and full and the trebles are silvery, breathy and echoey. With an uncultured hand (our personal speciality) the restricted dimensions of the design can bring on an inevitable sense of boxiness, but play full chords with a softer touch and there's a nice low-end bloom coming through that bodes well for the years to come. It's almost purpose-built for bluesy fingerpicking, with plenty of articulacy, sparkle and snap with either bare fingers or fingerpicks.

Verdict

The Crossroads Deluxe is a masterfully-made guitar. It's super-light, stunningly finished, and every detail is tip-top. It's also a super-tasteful design, paying attention to vintage specs without being afraid to add a contemporary slant in terms of neck profile and fine details. Get it in your hands and you will discover a crisp dynamic sound, with prominent mids and plenty of character. Equal to an original? There's no way to say. But you can be certain that this Huss & Dalton is right up there with the best of its competitors.

FINAL SCORE

CROSSROADS DELUXE	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**14**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**86%**



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LAKEWOOD
A-31 & M-18

Since 1986, Germany's Lakewood guitars have been flying the flag for quality European lutherie. We sample a couple: one fingerpicker, one all-rounder. Review by **Huw Price**

Cleanliness, precision and accuracy are the attributes that first struck us about these two examples from Lakewood's Natural Series. The lines are simple and elegant, decoration is restrained, and everything present seems to have a function or purpose.

The overall theme is woodiness – and lots of it. If any plastic is used in the construction of these guitars, we couldn't find any. Although the website doesn't trumpet the fact, bone is used for both nuts and saddles and the bridge pins are turned ebony with pearl dots; even the tuners have rosewood buttons. These guitars are made from solid woods rather than laminates – exactly what you'd expect at this price. Even the mahogany necks are one-piece affairs, joined to the bodies with bolts though the heel and glue under the fingerboard extension.

The fingerboards are ebony, and it's either very high grade or it has been dyed to achieve such a uniform colour. We suspect the former because nothing stained the fingers during playing – the usual telltale sign. The absence of binding exposes the fret ends, so it was immediately apparent that whoever installs and dresses frets in the Lakewood factory is a master craftsman. They are perfectly seated and dressed to kill.

Traditional slotted headstock with rosewood-buttoned Schallers

Rosewood back and sides with mahogany and maple binding

The lines are simple and elegant, decoration is restrained, and everything seems to have a function or purpose

Although the two guitars' basic designs are identical, the rosettes have different centrepieces. Lakewood select the inlay wood to match the backs and sides, so for these two models, East Indian rosewood is chosen for the A-31 and ovangkol for the M-18.

All the purflings and bindings are wood, but the headstock logos are white pearl. It's expertly done but the placement of the logos, combined with the design, makes them look a tad off-centre. We measured them to check so we can report that they're not, but some might feel the logos would look better across the top of the headstocks.

Although the model designations suggest that Lakewood took inspiration from the UK's road network, the term Natural Series most likely alludes ↦

FACTFILE
LAKEWOOD A-31

DESCRIPTION **Cutaway grand concert-sized electro acoustic. Made in Germany**
PRICE **£1,939 inc. hard case**

BUILD **AAA-grade solid European spruce top with solid rosewood back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony fingerboard, Schaller open gear tuners with rosewood buttons, LR Baggs Anthem pickup system**
LEFT-HANDERS **Yes (£130 extra)**
FINISH **Open pore satin gloss clear**

SCALE LENGTH
650mm/25.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 46mm
12th fret 57mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 20mm
12th fret 22mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 38mm
Bridge 57mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.5mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT **2.25kg/4.95lbs**

CONTACT **Go To Guitars**
01925 444696
www.gotoguitars.com
www.lakewood-guitars.com

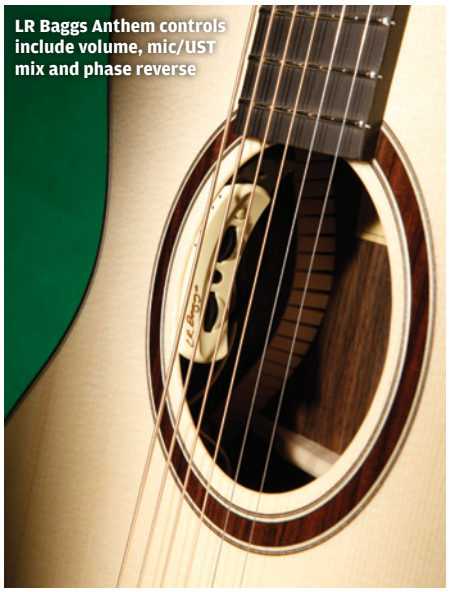
Lakewood only uses AAA or AAAA grade European spruce

The A-31's rosewood body contributes crisp, airy trebles with plenty of sustain and complex harmonic overtones

to the finish. The factory has gone for the currently popular 'open pore' style finish that isn't preceded by grain filling. This means the wood is sealed and protected, but it feels like natural wood rather than a layer of lacquer or plastic. So, having determined which characteristics these models share, it's time to examine the individual features in more detail.

A-31 Custom

The A-31 Custom is the smaller of the pair. Although the slot head with 12th fret neck joint formula may be old-school, the clean aesthetic and cutaway body design makes for far more contemporary overall feel. Looking closely at the construction, the neck has an exaggerated volute and the bridge is located dead centre on the lower bout.


LR Baggs Anthem controls include volume, mic/UST mix and phase reverse

Small pearl dot markers are provided along with a noise-cancelling LR Baggs Anthem pickup system that combines an Element undersaddle piezo pickup with an internal condenser microphone. The mic sits 3mm off the bridge plate, much like a boundary microphone, and the onboard crossover circuitry rolls off the piezo response above 250Hz.

The pickup's primary function is to generate the bass and low mid frequencies while allowing the Tru-Mic to handle the upper mids and treble. A control module is located just inside the soundhole and features a volume control, phase switch, battery status switch and a slider to blend the signals from the two sources.

Although slot-headed guitars are slightly trickier to string up, the trade-off is easier tuning. There's no need to reach over or around to grab a button, which is a real advantage if you like to play in a variety of tunings. On a side note, it must be said that these Schaller tuners are aesthetically very pleasing. These open-geared tuners are a perfect match for this style of guitar and they feel very smooth and precise.

FINAL SCORE

LAKEWOOD A-31	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

Sounds

String-to-string balance is very even, although the fairly small body doesn't allow for deep chesty bass. The rosewood contributes crisp and airy treble with plenty of sustain and complex harmonic overtones. Scoring low on the 'boxy' meter, the A-31 is some distance away from the woody, retro tones associated with some Martin style slot-heads.

The Anthem's output level is slightly lower than some modern pickup systems, but it's surprisingly resistant to feedback. With the fader set towards the undersaddle pickup the sound is dry and fairly typical of a high- quality piezo pickup – albeit with all the nasty top-end rolled off. The microphone sounds louder and brighter, with a discernible airiness that could never be achieved with an undersaddle pickup alone.

The microphone will certainly help the A-31 to cut through drums, bass and electric guitar in the mix, but used alone through a good amp some might find it too bright. The piezo fills out the sound and bolsters the bass without adding boominess, but so long as there is some of the microphone signal in the mix the Anthem system tends towards brightness – and there are no equalisation controls.

If you are playing through a preamp or mixer with tone controls, this shouldn't present too much of a problem. Ultimately this is a superior acoustic pickup system that actually manages to reproduce the sound and dynamic response of the guitar itself.

M-18

The Grand Concert sized body combines an AAA grade European spruce top with ovangkol back and sides. For those unfamiliar with ovangkol, Taylor established its use as a tone timber for guitar making. It's a rainforest hardwood from West Africa that some describe as a cheaper and more sustainable 'rosewood substitute'.

Since its headstock is thinner than the A-31's, the volute has a more subtle appearance. There are no position dots on the front of the fingerboard, but they are present along the top side. The tuners are Lakewood-branded Schaller M6 diecast units and, like the A-31, the M-18 has a rosewood veneer headstock veneer and heel cap. ↦

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FACTFILE
LAKEWOOD M-18

DESCRIPTION
Grand concert sized acoustic. Made in Germany
PRICE **£1522 inc. hard case**

BUILD **AAA-grade solid European spruce top, solid ovangkol back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony fingerboard, Schaller tuners with rosewood buttons**
LEFT-HANDERS **Yes**
FINISH **Open pore satin gloss clear**

SCALE LENGTH
650mm/25.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 46mm
12th fret 57mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 20mm
12th fret 22mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 38mm
Bridge 59mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 3mm
12th fret bass 3.5mm
WEIGHT **2kg/4.4lbs**

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314CE
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RRP **£1343**

Martin
000-18
The classic 000 with a solid spruce top, solid mahogany back and sides, rosewood fretboard, mahogany neck. Case included
RRP **£1458**

Soundhole inlay matches the M-18's solid ovangkol back and sides

The M-18 is a beefier and punchier-sounding guitar, more suited for forceful picking and rhythm duties

Although it appears much larger, the M-18 is actually only 10mm wider at the upper and lower bout, and the bodies are in fact the same length. If it weren't for the cutaway there wouldn't be much to choose between them, but the 14th fret neck join and bridge location should provide some sonic contrast.

Sounds

We had anticipated hearing some extra bass from this one, but there isn't much to choose between the two Lakewoods in that regard. The most striking differences are the softer trebles and stronger mids exhibited by the M-18. Both guitars are decent all-rounders, but the A-31 has a more delicate tonal quality with a faster and more complex response that might just win out with dedicated fingerpickers.

The M-18 is a beefier and punchier-sounding guitar, so it's better suited to more forceful picking styles and rhythm duties. Unlike some, Lakewood make no claim that ovangkol is a 'rosewood substitute', and that's probably for the best. The clear treble, complex harmonics and impressive sustain are certainly rosewood attributes, but this guitar's thicker and chewier midrange character is perhaps closer to walnut. In fact you might have thought the back and sides were walnut until you checked the specs.

Verdict

Dedicated acoustic players often prefer a medium-high action, and these Lakewoods were set up that way. Unlike many acoustics, the M-18 and A-31 had plenty of scope for adjustment because the saddles were unusually tall – protruding a little over 5mm above the bridge at their highest points. The build quality and sound certainly justify the retail price and, at this level, a setup should be part of the deal if you're buying from a shop. These are the types of guitars that serious players might buy if they tend to follow their heads rather than their hearts.

Both Lakewoods have a fairly wide 46mm nut

Rounded heel with matching ovangkol cap

FINAL SCORE

LAKEWOOD M-18	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**15**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**86%**

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Peerless

PEERLESS
Retromatic B2 Bass

German? A name beginning with 'D'? No, this is Korean company Peerless's very heavily-inspired new semi-acoustic bass. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

Peerless Guitars were established in 1970 in Busan, South Korea, initially as a subsidiary of Japanese-based conglomerate Fujigen, producing archtop and acoustic guitars for the likes of Gretsch and Epiphone. By the time 1980 and a management buy-out rolled around, Peerless had produced and exported over three million guitars. In 2007 they scaled back production when it became impossible to compete with Chinese manufacturers and relocated to a more sophisticated facility in Gimhae, South Korea, shifting their focus squarely onto Peerless-branded instruments with the emphasis on quality as to opposed to quantity.

In 2008 two semi-hollowbody basses were introduced – the Smoked Bass, a twin-pickup, single-cutaway, 34" scale model, and the Bassmaster, another full-scale semi but styled after the Les Paul Signature Bass. The new RB2 is based on the Retromatic 'P' Series guitar, its genesis, we're informed, the result of 'numerous requests from bass players who liked the styling of the guitar'. Finished in a glossy black, the body is like an oversized LP with a 17th fret neck/body join. Peerless employ laminated maple for the top, back and sides, the top being framed with classy three-ply cream/black/cream binding. Peering through the unbound f-hole you'll see a block running through the centre of the body, providing a solid mooring for pickups and bridge and splitting the chamber in half. The lower chamber contains the electrical gubbins, with the controls all mounted on the fighter plane-wing shaped pickguard, which is decorated with a recessed black line detail and an 'engraved' logo.

Laminated maple body and set maple neck

Compact tuners keep the weight down, helping keep neck-dive to a minimum

The RB2 is based on the Retromatic guitar, with a centre-block maple body and a 17th fret neck/body join

The black-lacquered maple neck is secured using the Gibson-esque set-in method, which isn't easy to assemble but should give a good warm tone. A fairly chunky profile means that the neck feels solid and playable as opposed to slim and fast. Peerless describe the headstock as 'New Style', which translates into a subtly widening oblong with a step-shaped cut-out at the furthest edge. You'll also find a P-for-Peerless metal badge and a plastic skyscraper-shaped plate which functions as the trussrod access cover. The tuners are chrome closed-gear Peerless GB-100 D51 NI units with T-shaped buttons, and the headstock is back-angled for healthy break-angle over the bone nut.

The rosewood fingerboard carries 22 medium jumbo nickel frets – well, 21.5 frets, as the top of the fingerboard has a diagonal slice. As well as a set of white dot markers on the almost invisible black neck binding there's a further set on the face comprising a solid block at the 12th fret and various oblongs broken into two or three shards elsewhere. It's a clever design which links well with the art deco-style angles on the pickguard and headstock.

FACTFILE
Retromatic B2

DESCRIPTION
Semi-hollowbody bass. Made in South Korea
PRICE **£999 inc. hard case**

BUILD **Laminated maple body, set maple neck with 22 frets on a rosewood fingerboard. Peerless GB-100 D51 NI tuners and Peerless roller bridge and stop tailpiece. Chrome hardware**

ELECTRICS **Passive with two Monty's London Design pickups, one wound to 8.7K (bridge) and one to 7.85k (neck). One volume and one tone control, three-way pickup selector switch and six-position Varitone dial**
LEFT-HANDERS **Yes, at £1198.80**
FINISH **Black, natural, teal green, honey sunburst, ivory, gold, candy apple red**
RANGE OPTIONS **None**

SCALE LENGTH
864mm/34"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 41mm
12th fret 55mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 23mm
12th fret 25mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 11mm
Bridge 19mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT
4.4kg /9.7lbs

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RRP **£899**

Vintage
VVB4 Violin Bass
Another route to hollow bass fun and surprisingly useful for all kinds of pop and roots music, although with a very particular look
RRP **£329**

Warwick
RockBass Star Bass
Cool-looking item with two humbuckers and one of the thinnest and fastest necks of any semi-solid. Only the five-string has a 34" scale neck; the four-string is 32"
RRP **£789**

The bridge is a two-piece affair with a separate section housing the saddles and a tailpiece for ball-end anchoring. The saddles can be adjusted back and forth, and the whole top bridge section moves up or down in Tunomatic style.

For the pickups Peerless turned to Matt Gleason at Monty's Guitars of London, and he provided the specs for a pair of humbuckers with shiny chrome covers, both wound hotter than normal, the neck unit Ohming out at 7.85k and the bridge at 8.7k. As for the controls, we get a master volume and a master tone and a three-way pickup selector switch, but Peerless has also included a six-position rotary Varitone control offering various pre-shaped tone colours. We couldn't get hold of any specific EQ information but the options range from a reduced width bottom end and zingier highs (first or 'neck' position) to a throatier sound with bottom end thud (fourth).

Sounds

Six Varitone positions with three possible pickup settings each equals a dizzying 18 different starting points, but we reckon that those who use an RB2 will end up having one favoured notch and maybe employ only a couple more on a regular basis. Hot-wound pickups should equate to more output, and this is very evident with the Varitone in position 1 – so much so, in fact, that you can't switch to another pickup combination in the middle of a song without recoursing to a level-boosting stompbox or suchlike.

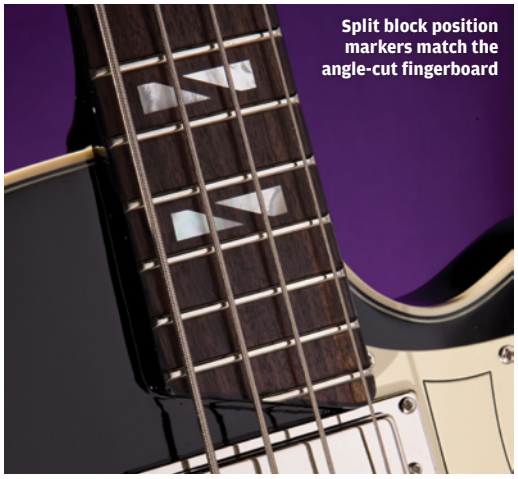
Turn both pickups on and the sound is bright and chimey with zingy, slightly nasal highs, a pleasing snarl from the E string and plenty of harmonic life for detail. The neck pickup is earthier and smoother with a rootsy blues edge, although still throaty on the E string, and the bridge is tight and burpy with good width and sharp, snappy highs, and funkier than you'd expect.

Stylish f-hole , chrome hardware and cream body binding

The shiny chrome-covered humbuckers are designed by Monty's of London and have been wound hotter than normal

Position 2 on the Varitone is more tonally even with a less aggressive E string, smoother highs and a lighter, tighter midrange – a good blank canvas for contemporary pop – and you get similarly more restrained and slightly bass-light variations from individual pickups. The next stop on the dial is pretty much a duller-sounding version of the above, the midrange being a tad boxy in twin pickup mode, and position 4 is similar again but with a softer, fatter bottom end and a fraction more high-mid and treble for a hint of nasal snap on the thinner strings.

With position 5 we'd have to guess that there's some form of midrange cut going on as the sound is at its smoothest and most bass-oriented but also the least defined, which will please anyone into a bit of dubby throb. The sixth position is the most bass-light and the weakest-sounding, although you get the impression with the neck setting that careful EQ-ing would get you closest to an upright bass simulation; it's similar with the bridge pickup, although the tight, even and true-sounding variation with a bit of zing is – with a bit of bass boost on your amplifier – pop/funk heaven in waiting.


Split block position markers match the angle-cut fingerboard

Verdict

Peerless' Retromatic B2 is a welcome addition to the ever-increasing range of semi-hollowbody basses on the market. Price-wise it's just outside budget territory, but it's well put together and extremely handsome. Although you have to question the usefulness some of the Varitone settings, at least half of them give good, practical starting tonal points, although the output level discrepancy between position 1 and all the rest is a bit of an issue. We reckon the RB2 will appeal to guitar-driven pop bands as well as those of a rootsier disposition, but that's not all it'll do.

FINAL SCORE

PEERLESS RETROMATIC B2 BASS	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**84%**

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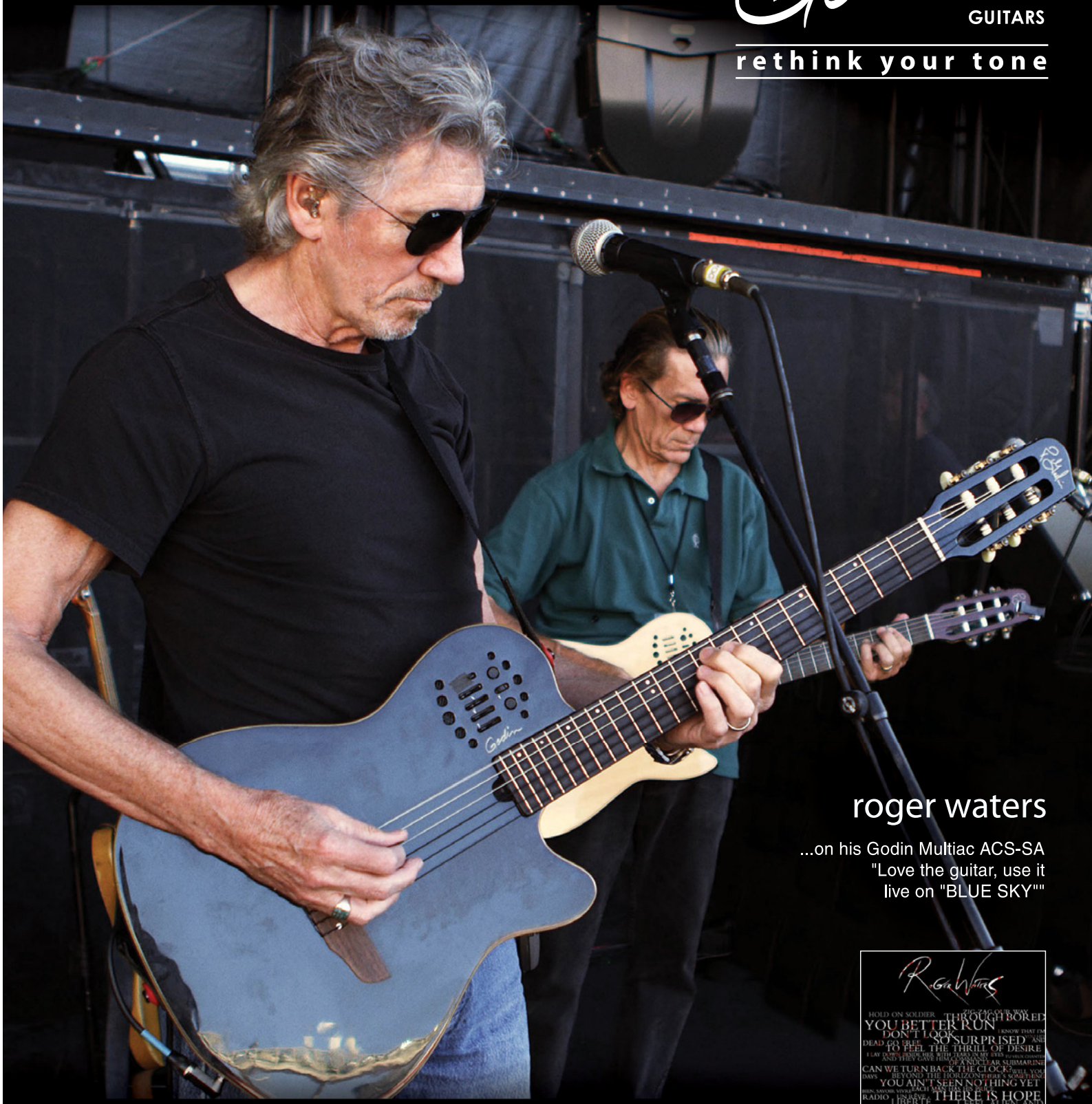

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ZILLA FBB212 Bass Cabinet

Built in the UK, Zilla's bass cabinets are hefty, traditional, and good. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

Zilla Music was established by Paul Gough in Cornwall in 2006. Their guitar cabs were so successful that they relocated to a facility in Bristol 10 times the size of their original premises. The quality of Zilla's cabs attracted the attention of bassists, too; initial orders were based solely on customer specs, but a bona fide range followed in early 2013, featuring the FBB212 cabinet on review this month.

The FBB212 has two sets of rubber feet allowing you to choose to arrange the drivers side by side or vertically. Taking into account the metal corner protectors it's roughly 472mm high, 761mm wide and 380mm deep. The weight is 24.9kg/54.7lbs, so you'll be making good use of the recessed metal handles as well as the top-mounted strap. Zilla have attempted to minimise the weight by using void-free 18mm birch ply, a popular choice for lightweight cabs, and they've done their best to make it look nice too with a black bronco Tolex overcoat and classy removable cloth grille. The green 'racing stripes' are an optional extra (basic starting prices are £410) and it's worth noting that Zilla also offer a recovering services, and can also help if you want to convert a heavy combo into more portable separates.

Beneath the bonnet you'll find a pair of Celestion BN12-300S 12" speakers (one standard option being lightweight neodymium Celestion S speakers) that'll belch out a crunching 600W. There's no tweeter, as that's what the vast majority of their customers desire. Other than that, you'll find a pair of circular plastic ports round the back, together with the connectors – one Neutrik Speakon socket and one locking jack socket.

Sounds

We used a 900W Genz Benz ShuttleMax 9.2 head and a B string-equipped active bass to test the Zilla. First impressions are of an accurate reproduction of the instrument's acoustic tone with plenty of bottom end response, excellent definition and plenty of clean, musical top end. It's solid and tight in the midrange, with a good balance between darker lows and gurglier high mids. Whacking a load more bass EQ into the mix causes the fixtures and fittings to rattle disturbingly, and while the core of the note is soft and rubbery, there's enough definition to give rootsy bluesmen, rock players and dubsters plenty of forward propulsion. In fact, the FBB212 does exactly what you'd hope with EQ tweaks while managing not to sound cold or clinical in the process. Boosting the lower mids throws a brooding veil over proceedings married to a barking edge and punchy attack; taking a similar path on the high-mid side tightens the sound, seasoning it with that snappy, gurgling sound that soul and funk players often favour. Some may question the lack of tweeter, but the result is less synthetic-sounding. Sure, on extreme treble boosts the Zilla gets pretty edgy, but the tone is pleasantly aggressive – which is far more fun than simply getting gradually more clanky and annoying.

Verdict

This is a ruggedly-constructed cabinet which will deliver a high-quality bass sound in a variety of different styles without making you work too hard to get it. Sure, there's no horn, but this is a bass player's cabinet, designed for us to do our fundamental job properly. There are issues with size and weight, as much of the similarly priced and spec'd competition can come in as much as 10kg lighter and less than half the size; it's not unfairly heavy, but you'll be under no illusions that you're lugging a bass cab. Still, we really like it, and would urge you to check one out.

FINAL SCORE

ZILLA FBB212 BASS CABINET	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Versatility	**16**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**86%**

FACTFILE
Zilla FBB212 Bass Cabinet

DESCRIPTION **600W 2x12" passive bass guitar cab with two Celestion BN12-300S speakers (no tweeter). 18mm birch ply cabinet with rear porting. Made in Bristol, UK**
RRP **£560**

FEATURES
One Neutrik Speakon and one locking jack

RANGE OPTIONS **Zilla 410, 4x10" 400/800W cab (from £460); Zilla 115, 1x15" 400W cab (from £400); Zilla 610, 6x10" 600/1200W cab (from £700); Zilla 612, 6x12" 1200/1800W cab (from £900)**

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HOOKED ON CLASSICS

GOODBYE NOT FAREWELL

This month **Phil Harris** explains how he's had to lock some old friends in the cupboard lest they tempt him to stray from the path. But they'll be back...

My desire to spend 2014 exploring blues guitar in new ways – well, at least they're new for me – has proved to be a real eye-opener. It's taking quite a lot of discipline and determination to stay away from certain instruments and playing styles that I have loved for a long time – and still do. For example, I've been playing fast, distorted lead guitar since the late '60s. Now when you're a young man and you're playing up and down the fretboard at a million miles an hour, it's exciting. When you're 58 and you play like that for an hour, you end up being out of breath and needing to take a valium.

But even if you know the effect it's going to have on you, it's still incredibly addictive. You can convince yourself that you'll only blow like that for five minutes and then get on with something else... but once you start those fast runs then you get sucked in, and before you know it the normally mild-mannered Phil Harris is no longer in charge of proceedings.

So the only way I can make sure that I don't get distracted is to make sure the kind of gear that encourages that behaviour is put away. Given that my working life is spent with guitars, this is a lot easier said than done. I'm not ashamed to say that if I've needed to get certain guitars out for a hire or whatever, I've spent plenty of time staring a hole in the case in the same way a former smoker often looks longingly at a cigarette packet.

On the whole I haven't had to pursue the same policy when it comes to listening to music. It's more the case that I've started listening for different things, and then reinterpreting them in different ways (I've never been one for note-for-note copying). For example, I used to play Gary Moore's *Midnight Blues* live eight years ago in the Phil Harris Band, but my new version of it mostly consists of harmonics rather than chords. And when I play *All Your Love* from the 'Beano' album, instead of playing a rocky version I know, I play it incredibly clean as – to my ears – it makes it sound twice as beautiful. It's a buzz to be able to listen to music I've known for years and to find new things to enjoy. It's all about finding your own way, rather than marking yourself against others. That lesson took me a long time to learn: I've been guilty in the past of making sure everyone in the room knew how good I was – and, preferably, how much better I was than them... even at informal jam sessions just meant to be a bit of fun. I'm finally over that now and have developed a greater understanding of the importance of feel and vibe when it comes to playing.

'It's all about finding your own way, rather than marking yourself against others. That lesson took me a long time to learn'

However, I've also come to realise that certain things are going to have to wait for another lifetime. I've always been proud of the fact that I was self-taught, but I thought that by now I'd have a better understanding of things such as music theory. Not a chance. When I've played with friends who are relative novices they've ended up telling me what scales I've been using, because I haven't a clue! It's not going to spoil my fun, though...

1955 GIBSON LES PAUL JUNIOR

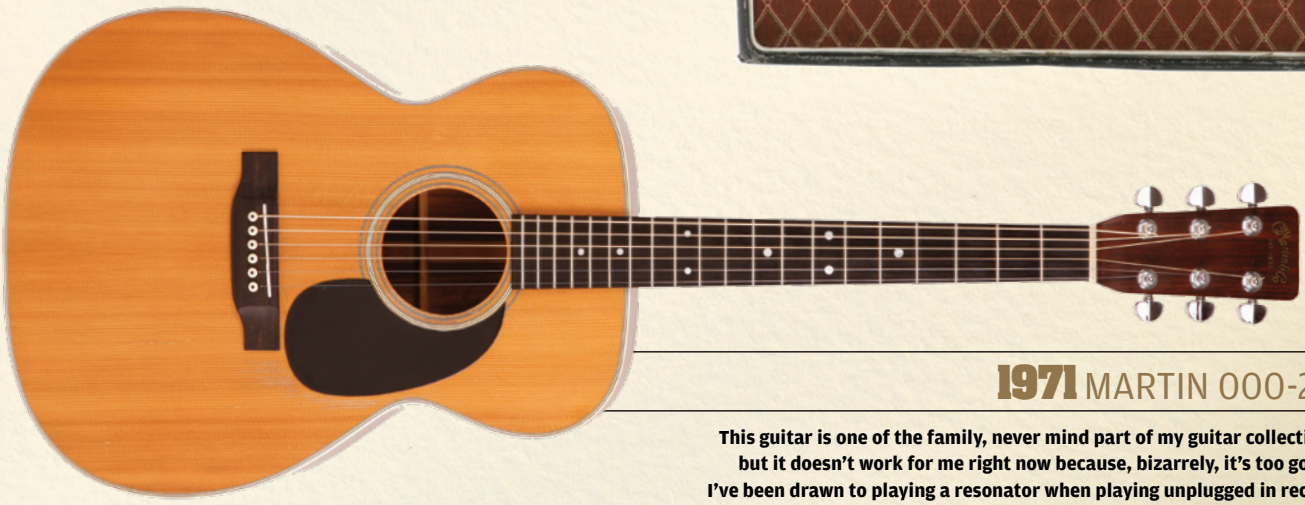
This is a wonderful guitar, but it's having to be locked away as its talents lie in delivering the dead opposite of what I'm trying to do this year. When I want to come back and make some fantastically over-the-top rock noises, this will be one of the first guitars I reach for

1962 ECHOPLEX

My love of using this Echoplex in a staggered fashion is a hard one to break, but – like using things like phasers and chorus pedals – it's going to have to stop for now. At the moment, all I really need is the guitar's natural tone, and maybe the odd bit of clean boost

1963 VOX AC15

This Vox, and my Marshalls, are fantastic 'hooligan' amps. That means they're great for turning up so that you and the listeners lose the first three layers of your skin and a fair bit of bone marrow – in a good way. Wonderful things, but certainly not suitable for the musical path I'm on at the minute



1971 MARTIN 000-28

This guitar is one of the family, never mind part of my guitar collection, but it doesn't work for me right now because, bizarrely, it's too good. I've been drawn to playing a resonator when playing unplugged in recent times. I don't use a slide, and fit it with 0.011" gauge strings so you can still shift them around as you can on an electric. It's also a wooden-body resonator, so where you play it near the neck really changes the tone. It's great for getting a traditional blues sound that works for me

1960s DANELECTRO LONGHORN

When I was playing fast lead stuff I'd play soul bass afterwards to calm myself down. Now I'm playing straight blues bass, which is also great for suggesting riffs to transfer over to guitar – and for that, this nifty Danelectro is far too fiddly-diddly for the job

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Western STARS

Quitting the capital and never looking back, Al Rideout carved a new musical life in the south-west. **Lars Mullen** pays him a visit to view the tools of the trade

Alan Rideout arrived in Cornwall nearly 40 years ago, a refugee from the London music scene. Growing up in the capital's Palmers Green, he played his part as a club and session drummer on the rock'n'roll circuit in the late '60s and early '70s.

'Sadly it was all starting to change in London,' Al explains. 'Bands were signing their lives away to big business people, and I decided it was time to take a different route.

'I arrived in Cornwall in the summer of 1975 with a job on the hotel trail, playing seven nights a week for 20 weeks. It was hard work, but it was such a relief... having work in the evening and hanging out on beautiful beaches during the day was an idyllic situation! As someone recently said to me in a very strong Cornish accent, "He came down a boy and went back a man" – except I never went back. I stayed here, and I've been in a load of bands playing many styles of music.

'Though I was a drummer by trade I'd always been a frustrated guitar player. The only guitar I had was this Vox Phantom VI Special, which I think dates from around the mid-'60s. I bought it from a friend who just had it propped up against a wall in his house in London. I couldn't really play at all, but I was fascinated by all the knobs and switches – and they all still work! At the time this guitar was totally out of fashion, so I got a good deal.

'I decided to pursue guitar playing in the late '70s, just when the first drum machines started to arrive on the scene. At the time the writing was on the wall for a lot of drummers. I saw one guy playing an organ with a rhythm unit in a box which to me sounded more like someone sneezing in time with the beat. The final straw came when a local, very good jazz drummer I knew said he couldn't get work.

'As the drum machines got better and better, I started to programme rhythm patterns for bands or solo artists and duos. It did almost make me redundant and throw away my sticks, but it made my three chords on the guitar even more important, so I started to take serious lessons, and I put myself on the market as a guitarist.

'I landed a full-time job with the Vox Phantom playing in rock cover bands, including lots of Status Quo songs – which is a real test for the rhythm hand! You can easily play Quo songs badly, but to perform them authentically and accurately is a task in itself. Personally, I'm making a living playing guitar by keeping a lot of my principles in my back pocket, just bringing them out now and again to keep my real identity.

'What I've learned over the years is that while we're all very interested in our sound and feel we must have certain amps, certain pickups and boutique pedals, the general public really don't give a damn – they just want a song with a good beat. I've had £300 pedals at times, and to me it's a lot of money for a red light on the floor that doesn't do much – but if you have a clean-sounding

Left, a Roland G-202; right, a Roland G-707 MIDI guitar

Oddball classic: Al's vintage Vox Phantom VI Special, with detail (above)

guitar then jump on a Tone Bender or a Fuzz Face, you'll hear the change!'

Al's work with programming early drum machines led him to some heavy experimentation with guitar synths. 'At that time, around 1979, the player at the top of the tree for me, was Pat Metheny. He created wonderful sounds from a guitar synthesiser and he was one of the first guitarists to pioneer electronic guitar music.

'Metheny used one of the early Roland GR-300 guitar synthesisers. I think the GR-300 was probably one of the first that had a really musical quality to it, and of course I had to have one. I was fascinated how I could change the sound of the guitar into something else, and I was made up in the '80s when we could get these sounds onto a basic computer.

'The natural-finish Roland guitar synth controller is a late '70s G-202. There were several of these with varied specifications. At one stage I fitted a pair of high-output Dimarzio single-coils as the humbuckers didn't seem that good when used without the floor synthesiser.

'Next to the G-202, the Roland G-707 is from the early '80s, and the first one they built that entered the world of MIDI. It's dated now of course, as electronics have moved on, although it would still be ideal for experimental sounds... or an acid house band, maybe!

'Casio were also on the scene in the late '80s with the MG-510 MIDI guitar, which came with a hexaphonic pickup system. It was good, but it did suffer from latency problems – in other words, the delay from the time you hit the strings to when the sound actually came out the amp. That did prove a problem sometimes when doing fast solo runs. I used this one for ages as a normal guitar, as it looked good in black.

'I've also got a Casio DG-20 digital guitar from the mid-'80s. Even traditional MIDI guitar players would probably laugh their heads off at this one, but it was up for such a good price that I really had to have it! It has built-in rhythms and a ton of preset sounds; the strings are a kind of rubber, all the same gauge, and they don't have to be tuned as there were sensors underneath the frets which triggered instant sounds without latency problems. It's still a fun guitar.'

As you can tell, Al is a bit of a dab hand with guitar electronics. 'I'm still fascinated by the hexaphonic pickup that can amplify and treat each string separately,' he says. ' I love working with guitars and electronics... as soon as new software or plug-ins arrive on the scene, I need to try it out. I'm currently spending hours working with guitars and computers creating film scores and sample sounds for a local film company called Shark Bay Films based here in Cornwall.

'For this kind of work the new Fishman Tripleplay system is light years ahead with the effects – and it's wireless. I've installed the Tripleplay on my pink Fender Squier Strat, which is my main computer guitar at the moment. It works fine; as we know, in reality it's just triggering the electronics, but it's also a cool player.

Left, a Casio MG-510; right, a Casio DG-20

'This actual guitar was one of a huge shipment of pink Squier Bullet Strats that I heard Fender in Amsterdam were knocking out for £50 each about two years ago. It seems they had a massive surplus of the pink ones, so I went to see Andy Pascoe, who runs Modern Music in Truro, my nearest guitar shop, and said I needed a few for my guitar students. I was so impressed when they arrived that I kept one back for myself.

'I picked up this white '80s Squier Strat cheap in Birmingham, and I've fitted a Roland hexaphonic pickup system along with a Seymour Duncan high-output single coil at the bridge and middle position. It's a bit of a Frankenstein guitar, but I use it mainly as a driver for my Roland VG88, which was part of their VG Series guitar systems from the late 1990s; these were MIDI-less and could be used live quite easily.'

A good deal on a guitar is always welcome, and Al often seems to manage to be in the right place at the right time. 'Well, yes, that's the story of most of the guitars in my collection,' he admits. 'All my guitars have more or less found me, rather having to trawl the internet or shops actually looking for a particular model. I have a few now that I want to keep pristine, while I'm happy to call upon any of the rest as working guitars for their various different sounds. ↔

Pink Squier Strat with Fishman Tripleplay system and a Roland-ready Squier Strat

Al brandishes his Hank-style '87 Fender Strat Plus

Squier Tele with red scratchplate in tribute to Wilko

'It seems that somebody's partner in a fit of rage threw their Fender Mustang off the cliffs into the sea'

'This fiesta red Series Strat Plus dates from 1987. I saw it on the wall of Modern Music, and when I talked to Andy Pascoe about it, he surely wasn't happy! Apparently several months earlier a guy had ordered a pink Strat with all the trimmings, just like Hank Marvin's, but he got it in the ribs from all his mates for having a pink guitar, so he took it back to the shop. As you've already seen, I love pink guitars, so we did an amazing deal. This Strat has been my number one gigging guitar for many years now, and I love the Lace Sensor pickups.

'Several of my students start lessons with a borrowed guitar, and often they ask how much they should spend on their own guitar. Most of them are on a budget, and I've often recommended Squiers for value.

'A prime example is this black Squier Telecaster, which cost just £90 on eBay. Some eBay purchases might need setting up a little here and there when they arrive, but that's easily done; saying that, this one hasn't needed to be touched... it plays great, sounds wonderful and stays in tune. Being a Wilko Johnson fan, I fitted a red scratchplate to it.'

Al continues with a tale that will have many guitar accumulators twitching with fear. 'I've read several *Private Collection* features in *Guitar & Bass* where collectors have had to smooth over their partners when they get a new guitar – or indeed, even when the subject of how many guitars they own is raised," he says. 'Well... I dread to think what the story must be behind this next one!

'I was in my local guitar shop and asked if I could use the toilet. Now, as guitar spotters will know, the best place to find a dusty old relic is usually in a corridor out the back.

'Sure enough, I found a box with a neck, body and rusty hardware inside, which turned out to be the remains of a Fender Mustang. I took it back in the shop, and asked the story behind it. It would seem for some reason or another, after a big row on a wet, stormy night, the loving wife or partner of the owner in a fit of rage threw it off the cliffs of the St Mawes peninsular into the sea, here in Cornwall. The guy found it the next day washed back up on the rocks in pieces, just held together by the strings. He took it to the shop pleading for someone to rebuild it – but they never saw him again.

'So here it is now, my reclaimed Mustang, looking pretty good refinished in white. You can still see some of the saltwater damage on the headstock. I've left this as a reminder to always be good to my own partner, the adorably wonderful Kc Johnson... more chocolates, darling?

'Here's another Strat Plus from the '90s series, loaded with the same Lace Sensors as the pink one. I bought it from one of my guitar students, mainly as a backup for the '80s one. I really like the way the tortoiseshell scratchplate evokes Buddy Guy.'

With all his experience, Al has a refreshingly lighthearted approach to the business of being on stage. 'As long as I can make a guitar sound great, I really don't mind what I play,' he laughs. 'My pink heart-shaped Daisy Rock guitar was built for girls, but so what – I love it!

'A friend called me up saying he'd seen a guitar that was perfect for me and he sent it in a purple bag, bless him. It's great. It's got a short scale and it gives a pretty wide selection of sounds via a humbucker and a lipstick pickup. It did have a tuning problem, which was solved by tightening the neck bolts.

'This raises my point again about what people really remember at a gig. They don't say how good the Joe Satriani solo was last night, it's more like "Hey, you're the one who played the pink heart guitar, wearing lime green shorts!" It's all about entertainment, and I feel that if we can't laugh at the same time, we've forgotten why we play guitar.'

Al also has a thing for an old classic or two. 'I was in a shop in Falmouth in Cornwall in the late '70s and saw this 1963 red Hofner Verithin semi-acoustic which took my breath away. I didn't care if it played okay or how it sounded, I just loved how it looked, especially with the Bigsby, which I knew nothing about, but it became mine for £40. For authenticity, I've always fitted flatwound strings.

'In complete contrast, I have three PRS guitars that I want to keep clean and tidy, – they're more of an investment. The darker blue one is a 1997 with a 22-fret neck. I spotted in a shop that was about to close down, and it was up for a price that I couldn't ignore. I've since customised it with a coil tap in the tone control, and wired the ↔

The refinished and repaired Fender Mustang and a 1990s Fender Strat Plus

ANDY CICHON
Billy Joel / Shania Twain / Shotgun Wedding

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Above, a Daisy Rock; right, a vintage Hofner Verithin

Two PRS guitars, a 22-fret from 1997 and a 24-fret from 2005

pickups out of phase in the middle position on the switch. I did reverse the bridge humbucker for effect, but my wiring guy turned it back around, saying I'd put it in the wrong way... but it was intentional, of course.

'Next to it is a 24-fret PRS dating from 2005. Again, finding this one was all about being in the right place at the right time. I was in a guitar shop when a guy walked in wanting to upgrade to a higher-spec PRS, and he had this one in the case. "Mint" is a broad statement really, as we've all seen guitars tagged "mint" when they've obviously been gigged, but this one is untouched and spotless. I've never played it either – I'm afraid if I do it'll become my guitar and get all the usual scratches and dings. This is my "serious investment" guitar.

'The last PRS is a three-year old black NF3 which I call my "leap of faith" guitar. This is more or less a new direction for me. It does nod its cap to a Stratocaster, with a bolt-on neck, five-way switch and three pickups, which are PRS's Narrowfield design. It's a beautiful guitar and I'm still experimenting with using it. With the volume backed off the pickups sound like single coils with superb clarity, while at full tilt it's entering humbucker territory. This guitar is growing on me by the minute.

'The Futurama III De Luxe is from 1963 – it was pulled out of a friend's loft. From the same era and almost the same circumstances, this little Teisco Sakai Top Twenty guitar came from an old lady's wardrobe. It seems her husband never used it. I've actually gigged with this one – it's in good condition and it's complete with the vibrato arm.

'Another cool deal was this Gibson Les Paul Junior, with P100 pickups which give it that extra bite. I probably wouldn't have been interested in this guitar, but a guy I knew was giving up and offered it at a real knockdown price. My son had it for a while, but now he's upgraded I've nabbed it back. This is my reclaimed father's guitar!

'I do like a project or two, and I have several guitars that need renovating or are under construction. This headless Hohner G2 tremolo model is going to take a long time to get back to its original condition. The little Hofner HCT Shorty was designed as a travel guitar, and I'm setting it up as a slide guitar, which shouldn't take long. Others ready for a makeover include a Strat-style Sumbro, which is extremely heavy and worth renovating. But this Satellite I feel just might be beyond hope. It's starting to look like my sacrificial guitar... I just need the lighter fuel now!

'Working with computer-created music, there are some wonderful bass guitar effects on hand, but I do have the need for the odd real-life bass. The Hofner Violin bass is one of the Contemporary Series ones, and I've fitted flatwound strings to it. It's very light, ↔

Top Twenty guitar and a 1963 Futurama III De Luxe

PRS NF3 with Narrowfield pickups and a Gibson LP Junior with P100s

Headless Hohner G2 and a Hofner Shorty reissue

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A sunburst Sumbro Fender copy and a single-pickup Satellite

Hofner Violin Bass and a '70s Gibson Grabber bass

a classic bass with a very personal sound, and it's my tribute to the first ever bass player a lot of us bowed down to, Sir Paul.

'My '70s Gibson Grabber bass was also found in a backroom toilet of a guitar shop, resting against a damp wall, going green with mould. Apparently it was another "It's me or the guitar!" story, but wasn't thrown off a cliff this time... just more or less dumped in this shop. I've spent a very worthy £200 having it restored. This is a great bass, light, vibrant and loud, with a heavy and well-defined sound from the single sliding humbucker.

Al has a soft spot for an acoustic guitar too. 'I needed an authentic classical guitar sound for a film score I was working on, and I had a hankering to try a real nylon-strung guitar. I was slightly out of my comfort zone staring at these on the wall in a guitar shop, when I overheard a lady who had brought this pristine little Yamaha G-235 in to trade. It certainly has the tone I need... I'm wondering if I should have grown my fingernails or not.

'The Ashton 12-string was another music shop find. It had been bought by another guitar teacher who had spent time setting it up, so it was ready to go. I must say it's performing exceptionally well right now.

'I'd heard about the Vintage acoustics designed by Paul Brett, a fine fingerpicker. He has his own series of Vintage guitars, and this one is the VE8000PB with a rosewood body and solid spruce top, gold hardware and Fishman electrics. The spec sounded ideal for the odd occasion when I go to a folk event. I must say it's exceptional value for the price, with a warm, sweet tone.

'I had to do a lot of research for this next nylon-strung acoustic. I could just make out an address on a ripped label in the soundhole. Thanks to the internet I found out it's a handmade Spanish guitar made by the A. Dotras Cordoba company in Barcelona during the late '50s – they're still producing guitars to this day. I did a straight swap with a lady who had it as a piece of furniture; I had a cheap, highly lacquered beginner's acoustic which she said looked so much better, so we swapped. As I'm primarily an electric guitar player, this one has taught me a lot about classical guitars. Oh, and next to it is an unnamed steel-strung acoustic which I found when clearing out a friend's garage. After a little scrubbing up and fresh strings, I hit a big E minor chord and nearly fell off the chair, it's so loud. It's almost resonator-like... perfect for Delta blues.

'I can take you deeper than that with this African instrument, which I can't really find any information about. It has a single string for solo notes and an accompanying drone string. I've recorded it with some fabulous results using computer effects... there's this wiry Jew's harp sound happening.

'Lastly I thought I'd include this, as what goes around comes around in my collection. The You Rock MIDI guitar by Inspired Instruments has been out a while, and I think it's quite incredible. Unlike most MIDI guitars, has almost zero latency. The action is as low as could be, as the strings are actually simulated and stuck to the fingerboard. String bends and vibratos can't be done manually you do it via the toggle switch or vibrato arm. It does have limitations here and there but these are vastly outweighed by its capabilities, and it sounds wonderful. I think it's the ultimate travel guitar, as the neck is removable. You just need headphones and play along to the backing tracks, or start recording if you have a laptop.

'I think now and again guitar players have to look at the whole scenario from the other side of the fence, where people are not players but listen to music. After all, guitars are just bits of wood with strings, and for us to be able to make sounds that we all love and transmit them through these wonderful instruments is a real celebration of the human spirit.'

Futuristic You Rock MIDI guitar and unknown African instrument

Yamaha G-235 classical and an Ashton 12-string

Vintage VE8000PB acoustic, an A Dotras classical and an anonymous acoustic

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THE CUT-PRICE COLLECTION

This month **Sid Bishop** delves into the world of budget vintage guitars, beginning with Gibson's changeable Melody Makers, followed by Fender Jaguars, Jazzmasters, and some fascinating though lesser-known Fender models...

The Gibson Melody Maker was introduced in 1959, and is still with us. There have been many variations in the intervening 55 years, and all have been good consistent sellers – Gibson's 'bread-and-butter ' line if you will. The original concept was to offer potential Gibson customers a basic stripped-down guitar, aimed primarily at beginners. Once hooked into the Gibson ethos, and as their proficiency improved, they would aspire to invest in one of Gibson's more expensive offerings, hopefully then being ensnared for life. Quite often this strategy worked very well. A significant number of today's big-name guitarists would have had a Gibson Melody Maker as their first 'real' guitar, and now look upon them with affection.

Being basic student models, none of these were expensive, and today examples of Melody Makers, even the less common models, can be picked up at relatively moderate prices. It becomes a viable proposition therefore to build a collection consisting of genuine vintage items, but without breaking the bank. Throughout the 1960s Gibson also manufactured their Epiphone equivalents in single and double pickup versions, designated the Olympic.

There are four basic body styles. First came the single cutaway version, based on the '50s slab-bodied Les Paul Special and Juniors, but the Melody Maker having a thinner body (Joan Jett used one of these extensively, and there has been a Joan Jett tribute model). These were made in single or double pickup flavours, and in a threequarter-scale version for younger beginners. Secondly came a double cutaway variant. In the mid-'60s came the rather primitive looking 'almost like a half-finished SG' body model (Joan Jett used one of these too), and finally the SG-styled series with the familiar sculptured bodies. All of these guitars, regardless of body shape,

Post-'66 SG-type Melody Maker in a custom colour with vibrola

Circa 1959-'60 single-cutaway Melody Maker

L-R: 1966 Melody Makers, a Joan Jett signature and an MM of the '61-'63 period

Gibson Melody Makers can be picked up at moderate prices, letting you build a vintage collection without breaking the bank

featured a distinctive narrow headstock. They were available in single and double pickup formats, but the SG-bodied series included a three-pickup model, and also a 12-string for the first time. These 'SG' versions were available in red, white or blue, all with white pickup covers and scratchplates. The necks were not finished in a solid colour, but were a varnished bare wood – so no, it hasn't had a replacement neck, it's meant to look like that. We have recently witnessed the introduction of five new Melody Maker models, their names giving a clue to their body style. We now have the Explorer MM, the Les Paul MM, the SG MM and the Flying V MM, and finally the Melody Maker Special, which actually bears a very close resemblance to the single-cutaway '50s models but with P90s. All reasonably cheap (some may say just a little too cheap), but it has become realistic at last to own a real US-made Gibson for the same price as many Korean or Chinese guitars.

All of these (other than the latest MM Special) are fitted with single-coil Fender-style pickups, but without exposed poles. As these units are not particularly powerful, or tonally efficient, many players upgraded their guitars with the addition of humbuckers, or on occasion P90s. This is the most commonly seen Melody Maker mod, but as the fitting of these necessitated routing out the body cavity, reversing such an alteration is not very practical. Any such 'upgrade' is certain to diminish the value of a vintage guitar to a collector, so make due allowance when you consider a purchase. If however you want to buy one as a 'player', then this might not represent so much of a concern.

Most desirable will be the '50s single cutaway models, especially the twin-pickup version, but the SG-bodied examples shouldn't be cold-shouldered and in fact would provide a nice alternative to an SG Junior or Special, and at around half the price.

Now some interesting Fenders. Fender have manufactured a wealth of guitars aside from the iconic Stratocasters and Telecasters. Some have turned out to be very successful, hence highly sought after, and others have been disastrous and since transformed into trendy kitchen clocks. There have been the entry-level Broncos (1967-1981), Duo-Sonics (1956-1969 in various forms), several versions of the Musicmaster (1955-1982),

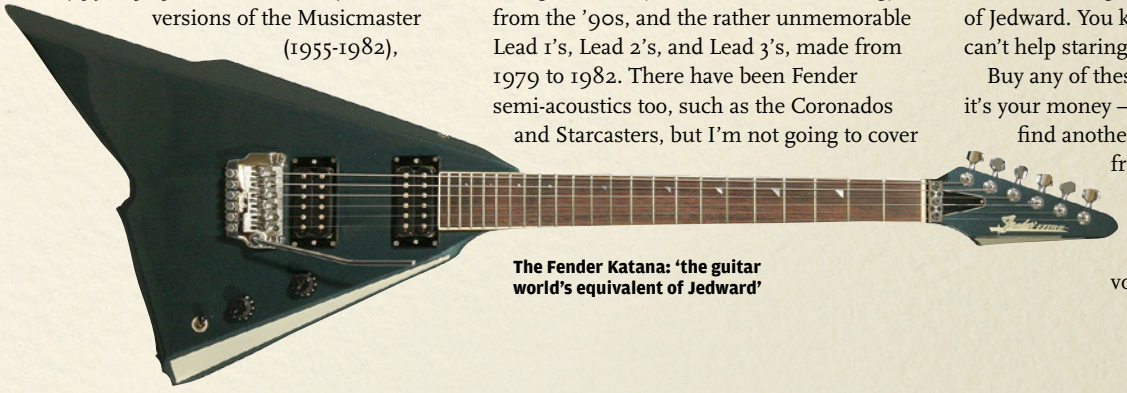
L-R: 1972 Fender Bronco, ex-Ike Turner fender Mustang and a 1969 Swinger

Fender have manufactured a wealth of guitars other than Strats and Teles; some have been successful, and others have been disastrous

Mustangs (from 1964 on), Customs (also designated Mavericks), and a handful of rarely seen oddities such as the Cyclone, loosely based on the Mustang, which limped along from 1997 to 2006 in various forms (a Squier Cyclone also exists), the Swinger (1969 only), the Marauder (1962-1966), recently reissued though with major alterations, the Prodigy from the '90s, and the rather unmemorable Lead 1's, Lead 2's, and Lead 3's, made from 1979 to 1982. There have been Fender semi-acoustics too, such as the Coronados and Starcasters, but I'm not going to cover these here, though I will do next month if I live that long.

Despite my instinctive aversion to do so, I also have to mention the truly ghastly Katana, made in 1985, thankfully just for that single year, though it did later resurface as part of the Squier range. I would consider the Fender Katana as being the guitar world's equivalent of Jedward. You know it's awful, but you just can't help staring in horrified fascination.

Buy any of these if you want to – after all, it's your money – but are you likely to quickly find another person who will buy it from you? Perhaps not. Several of these models have reappeared in more recent years, such is the current vogue for vintage nostalgia. ➔



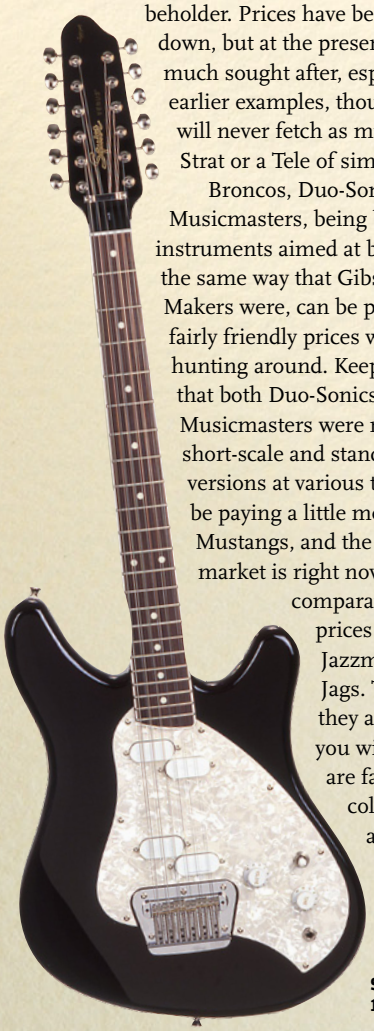
The Fender Katana: 'the guitar world's equivalent of Jedward'

There are those who will eagerly buy absolutely anything that's old, though paradoxically not every old guitar will be especially valuable.

For all you bass fans, I also have to make mention of the Musicmaster bass, the Mustang bass, and even a Katana bass. The first two have been good steady sellers for many years, and I also must mention the recently introduced Jaguar bass, all in addition to the rightfully legendary Precision, Jazz, and Telecaster basses.

Much more desirable will be Jaguars and Jazzmasters. The Jazzmaster first appeared in 1958, and the similar but higher-spec Jaguar followed in 1962, which at the time became the most expensive guitar in the Fender catalogue. They got stuck in a bit of a surfing rut at first, and when that craze eventually subsided giving way to a heavier variety of rock'n'roll, the Jaguar/Jazzmaster found itself somewhat left hung out to dry. Although one would turn up here and there over the next few decades, they didn't become especially popular again until very recently. Unfair, I think, as they are versatile and thoughtfully-designed instruments with an unrivalled tonal range. The Jaguar was discontinued in 1975, not to be seen again until 1999, and initially then made only in Japan. They look cool too, though beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Prices have been up and down, but at the present they are much sought after, especially earlier examples, though they will never fetch as much as a Strat or a Tele of similar age.

Broncos, Duo-Sonics and Musicmasters, being basic instruments aimed at beginners in the same way that Gibson's Melody Makers were, can be picked up at fairly friendly prices with a little hunting around. Keep in mind that both Duo-Sonics and Musicmasters were made in short-scale and standard-scale versions at various times. You'll be paying a little more for Mustangs, and the way the market is right now, comparatively high prices for Jazzmasters and Jags. The older they are, the more you will pay. They are fascinating to collect though, and a practical alternative to Strats and Teles, many of which in any case will be priced way beyond our means. Unlike Strats and Teles, forgeries of most of these 'other' Fenders will be very unusual, as they are not worth enough for anyone to bother.



Squier Venus 12-string

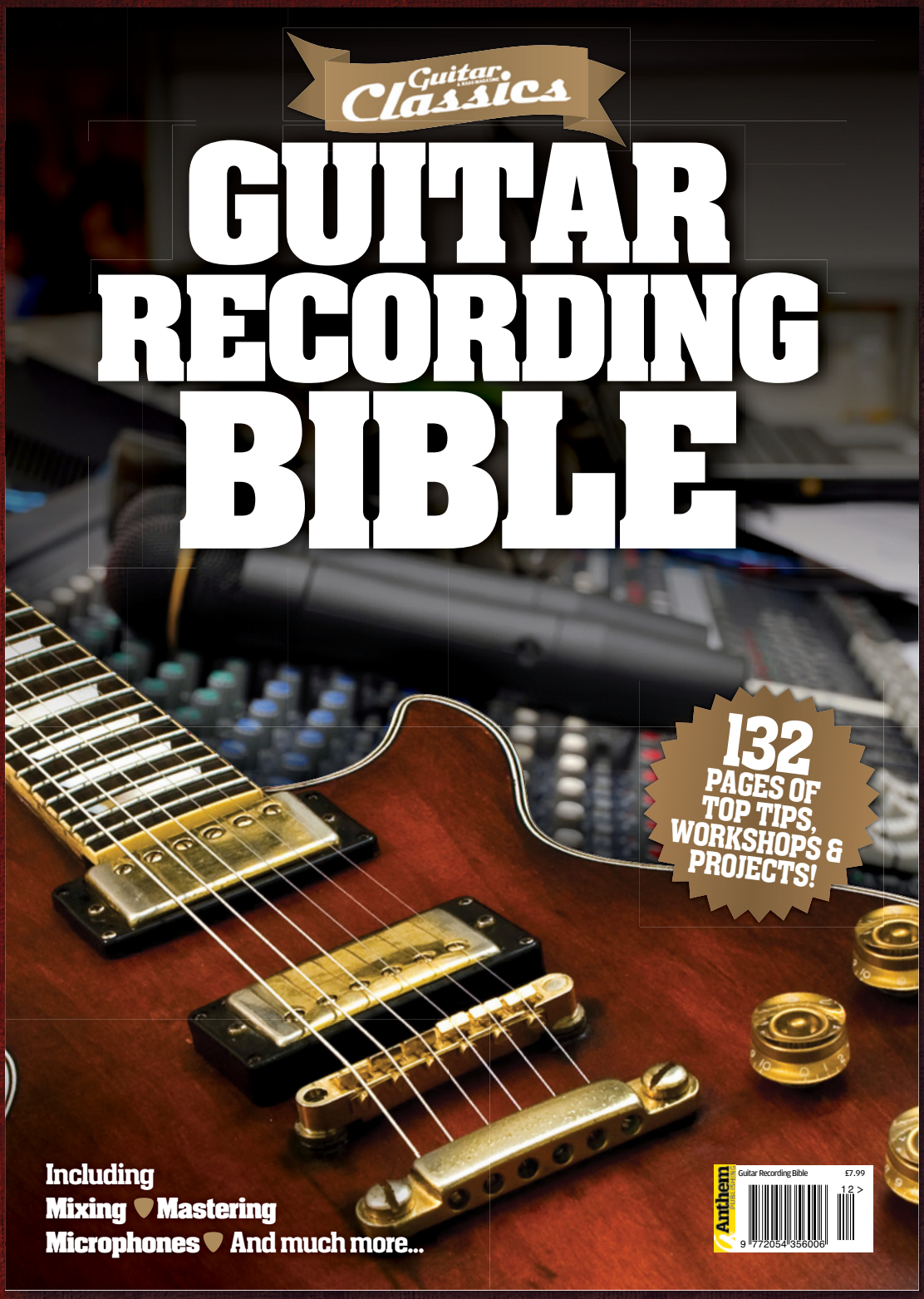
Below: the 1965 catalogue shows prototype hidden-pickup Marauders alongside a Jag and a Jazzmaster

L-R: 1965 Electric XII, 1963 Jaguar, 1958 Jazzmaster

The Jaguar and Jazzmaster didn't become popular until recently, which is unfair, as they are versatile and thoughtfully-designed guitars

I'll round off this segment with a look at Fender's solid body 12-strings. There have only ever been two, a recent and highly useful Japanese made Stratocaster 12, issued in sporadic limited runs which I'm confident will continue into the future, and the famous '60s 'hockey-stick' model, with the split-coil pickups, offset Jaguar-style body, and distinctive headstock, hence the epithet. I spotted one in the hands of Lloyd Cole a couple of months back. These were in production from 1965 until 1969, and being only ever made in small batches remain fairly rare. Despite all my years in the business I can't recall handling more than a dozen or so. These were designed specifically for the folk-rock market, but were doomed to be eclipsed by the all-conquering Rickenbackers. If you ever see one of these at what seems to be a reasonable price, just grab it, especially if it's a custom colour. Curiously they've never been reissued, though I wouldn't like to guarantee that they won't be sometime in the future; however in 1997 there was an all too brief appearance of a broadly similar Venus 12-string as part of the Squier range, but if you'd blinked you would have missed it. Perhaps we should start up a petition requesting that they make a few more.

FROM THE MAKERS OF Guitar & Bass



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Guitarists GET FIT!

Tight shoulders, pains in the arms... is your body letting you down? Here's physiotherapist **Marion Turner** with some exercises designed to help you fine-tune your mortal shell for a long and rewarding playing career...

Anyone who works with computers or in manufacturing with machinery can tell you all about aches and pains. Indeed, most of us have heard about Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) and the long-term problems it can cause. We guitarists tend to overlook the intensely physical nature of the instrument because we become so absorbed in what we're doing – and many of us only start to think about the side-effects when problems start to make playing more difficult.

If you want a happy and long playing career, then you'd better get guitar fit. But don't panic; we're not about to get you doing press-ups and star jumps. In this article we'll be looking at possible long term problems, and helping you spot symptoms before they become chronic – and we've developed some simple stretching exercises that any player will benefit from.

Most of the problems that happen to guitarists are 'overuse syndromes', where the repetitive nature of playing the guitar causes problems in tendons, nerves and muscles – commonly the soft tissues of the body. The onset of any of these conditions can be attributed to many things: poor technique, poor posture, general lack of fitness, other medical conditions and external factors such as temperature, change of instrument, strings and so on. Being aware of the early warning signs of injury is paramount in the prevention of serious and chronic conditions. Do any of these sound familiar?

Signs to watch out for...

- Pain in the arms, hands or neck during or after playing or practicing.
- Restricted movement and/or swelling in the arms, hands or neck.
- Pins and needles or numbness in one or both hands.
- Weakness and reduced endurance.
- Changes in colour, temperature and sweating in the hands.

If you've got symptoms, you *must* start treatment early. Seek out professionals who specialise in the treatment of the upper limbs – and ideally in the treatment of musicians.

Some specific factors that may contribute to these problems are things that to some extent you can manage yourself. These include...

- Increase in time spent playing
- Change in guitar (or set-up) – a wider neck, heavier gauge strings, a higher action, the weight of the guitar, and so on
- Change in posture while playing – such as standing or sitting for longer
- Watch out for temperature: playing in a colder environment reduces circulation to the muscles
- Medical conditions: diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and thyroid disease are among those which can cause problems with your ability to play
- Change in work conditions – a new job with new physical demands, or more time spent on computer (this includes digital recording).

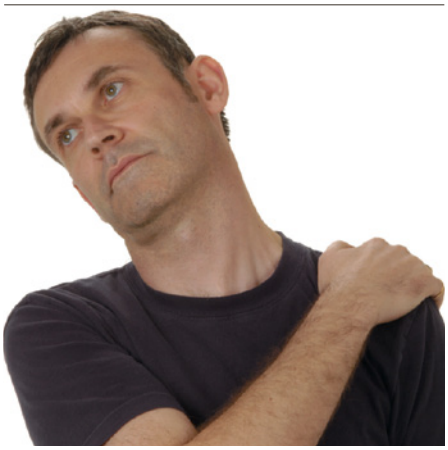
Some useful tips for injury prevention...

- Warm up and cool down with gentle stretches (see our stretching program).
- Take frequent breaks if possible – say, about five minutes' rest every 20 minutes
- Don't practice when you are physically or mentally tired. Fatigue leads to increased risk of injury due to poor technique
- Concentrate on maintaining good technique all the time
- Strengthen the spine. A strong spine will free up the arms to play rather than using them to support the instrument
- Move around while playing to reduce the effects of static posturing. Staying too still or using muscles in a small range of motion reduces blood supply to the tissues; this can increase muscle fatigue and lead to injury
- Build up your playing time gradually prior to a performance. Don't expect to be able to play for three hours straight when you only practice for half an hour at a time
- Consider ergonomic aids and the set up of

1 UPPER NECK

Upper neck extensors: with one hand, tuck your chin in towards the neck to create (or emphasise!) a double chin. Using the other hand on the back of the head, gently tilt your head forward while maintaining the chin tuck. The stretch should be felt in the upper part of the neck (take care not to push this too hard, as headaches may result). Hold for 15 seconds, and repeat three times.

2 SCALENE STRETCH



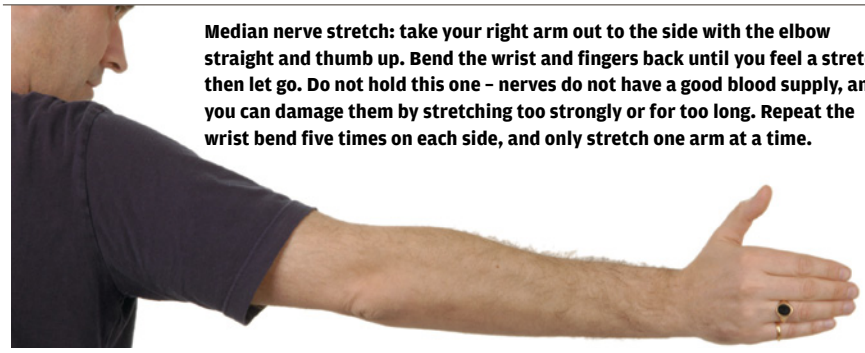
For the scalene stretch, place right hand on left shoulder. Tilt your head away from the hand to the right, keeping the face looking forward. Gently tilt the head back a little from this position. You should feel the stretch on the left side of the neck. Hold for 15 seconds, and repeat three times on each side.

your guitar. Is your strap adequate? There are alternatives that distribute the weight of the guitar over both shoulders. Is the action too high? Can you use a more comfortable pick?

- Maintain good nutrition to enable the body to recover from playing. That also means drinking plenty of water
- Take up an activity that encourages good posture – yoga, for instance, or Pilates, or Alexander Technique
- Make sure you maintain/achieve a good level of fitness and control stress by exercising regularly. Walking is a good start. Meditation isn't a bad thing, either.

↦

3 MEDIAN NERVE



Median nerve stretch: take your right arm out to the side with the elbow straight and thumb up. Bend the wrist and fingers back until you feel a stretch, then let go. Do not hold this one – nerves do not have a good blood supply, and you can damage them by stretching too strongly or for too long. Repeat the wrist bend five times on each side, and only stretch one arm at a time.

4 MEDIAN NERVE GLIDE AND STRETCH

For possible carpal tunnel problems, bend the wrist back slightly and then let go immediately. Don't hold the stretch!

5 WRISTS AND FINGERS

Here's a useful wrist and finger flexors stretch. Lace one arm out straight in front of you, palm facing away, and gently pull the wrist and fingers back with the other hand until a stretch is felt in the forearm/wrist and/or the palm of the hand. Hold for 15 seconds, and repeat three times on each arm.

6 MORE WRIST STRETCHES

Wrist extensors stretch: place one arm out straight in front of you. Gently pull the wrist and fingers down with the other hand until you feel a stretch in the back of the forearm and wrist/hand region. Hold it for 15 seconds, and repeat three times on each side.

7 HAND EXERCISE

Finger flexion and extension: make a fist, then spread fingers and thumb open and apart as far as possible. Repeat the movement 10 times on each hand.

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The stretching program shown is a good starter for general warm up and cool down sessions. Take care to hold the stretches at the point where you just start to feel the stretch – not pain – and don't 'bounce' while stretching. If any of these stretches causes real pain rather than a feeling of stretching, then stop and seek professional advice immediately.

Specific problems

Having discussed fitness, we're now going to look at the five conditions most commonly seen in guitarists: thoracic outlet syndrome, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, cubital tunnel syndrome and focal dystonia. We mentioned that many of the physical complaints faced by guitarists are those that affect the soft tissues of the body. Well, fore-armed is fore-warned – so let's look at the four most commonly-encountered conditions, and some ways of dealing with them.

Thoracic outlet syndrome

The thoracic outlet is the anatomical name for the area where the chest, shoulder and neck meet; major nerves and blood vessels pass through here on their way to the arm and hand. Thoracic outlet syndrome (TOS) is caused by compression of the major nerves and blood vessels in this area. It is usually felt as non-specific aching of the arm(s) and may be associated with fatigue or lack of endurance in holding positions and tingling and/or numbness in the hands during use. There may also be colour and temperature changes in the hand, such as going blue and cold regardless of the weather conditions.

In some cases, the presence of an extra rib (coming off the last neck vertebra) can cause TOS, but this is quite rare. Usually it's caused by the nerves and vessels being squashed as they pass through tight muscles in the area, and it's commonly seen in people with droopy shoulders. Over time, poor posture leads to changes in these muscles. Holding the arm in a forward or elevated position for long periods of time can cause problems, too.

TOS is often seen in guitarists' fretting arms because of this forward positioning: the way the guitar strap comes over this shoulder area only adds to the compression. If this is a problem for you, try a double shoulder strap, or a stand that takes the weight of the guitar when practising.

Generally, the symptoms come on when the arm is raised. You can check this out by holding both arms in the 'surrender' position (the shoulders and elbows bent to 90 degrees – see pictures above) while opening and closing the fists for 60 seconds. This test may reproduce the symptoms, but not always. Similarly, nerve conduction studies, X-rays and vascular investigations do not always provide conclusive proof of TOS – making it a difficult condition to diagnose. In rare cases, surgery may be recommended – in the presence of an extra rib, the rib may be removed. Generally, however, it is posture and technique that will need to be modified.

Tight musculature needs to be stretched and the muscles of the upper back and shoulders need to be strengthened to support good posture. The eight stretches shown, particularly those for the pectorals and scalene muscles, are often recommended when TOS occurs. A health professional specialising in treating these disorders can give further advice specific to your condition.

Carpal tunnel syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a result of compression of the median nerve at the base of the palm of the hand in the carpal tunnel. The nerve shares this space with nine tendons; any change in size of the tendons or nerve in this confined space caused by swelling or inflammation results in the nerve being compressed. This leads to pain in the hand (and possibly up the arm), pins and needles and/or numbness in the thumb, index, middle and sometimes ring fingers. These symptoms are often worse at night in the early stages, waking the sufferer from sleep. In more severe cases, weakness and general clumsiness (such as dropping things) will occur and symptoms will be present during the day. The guitarist will notice difficulty in performing fine finger hammer-ons.

To test for this condition, hold the index, middle and ring fingers out straight with the other hand while trying to bend the little finger towards the palm. If you are unable to bend it at the middle knuckle, release the ring finger and let them try together. If they can only bend together, there's an interconnection present (sometimes the middle finger is involved, too).

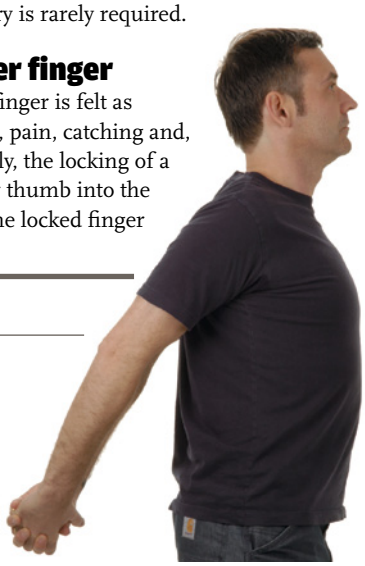
Approximately 40 per cent of people have this anatomical variation on at least one hand, but it's not usually a problem unless it's in your fretting hand. If you have this variation, pushing yourself to perform techniques that you cannot physically do will inevitably strain the muscles and tendons.

Treatment:

- Relative rest
- Ice is useful in the acute phase when swelling is present. Apply for 10 minutes every hour to reduce swelling
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Strengthening exercises for intrinsic muscles, finger extensors and the shoulder girdle plus gentle stretching exercises for the affected tendons/muscles as prescribed by a hand therapist
- Splinting, massage, heat, ultrasound, trigger point therapy and acupuncture
- Review of technique/practice habits
- Steroid injections
- Surgery is rarely required.

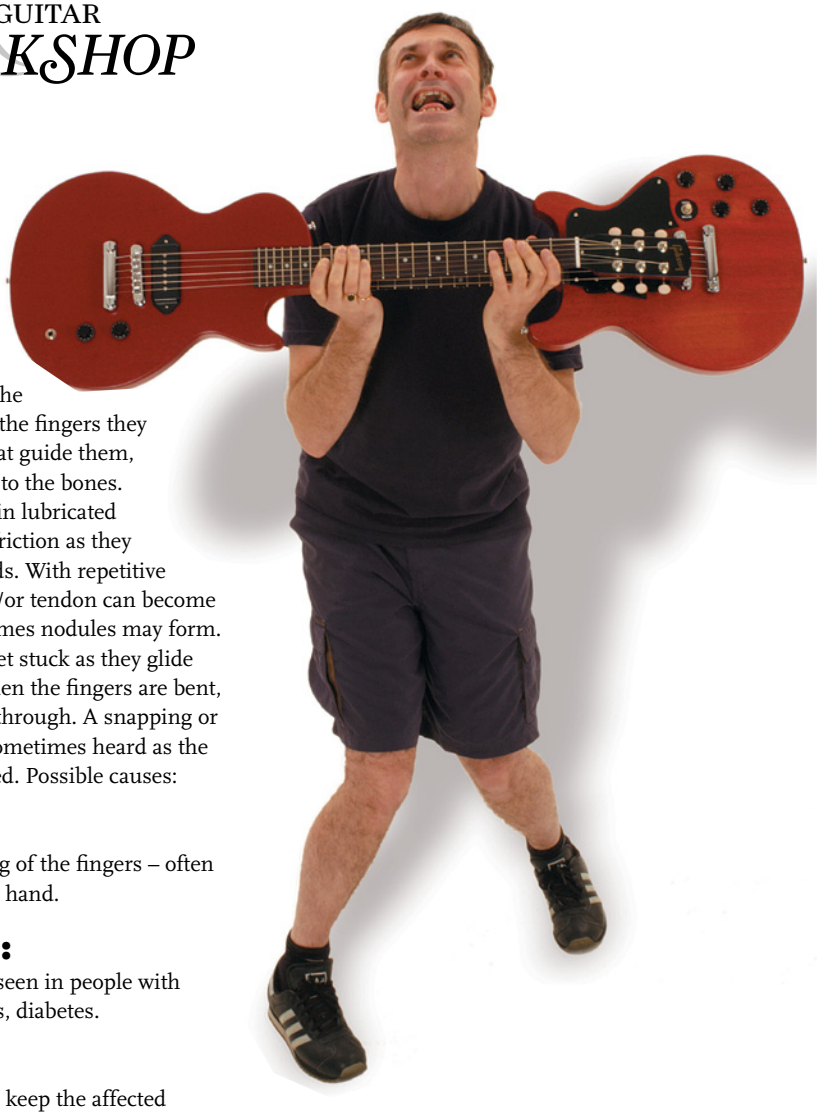
Trigger finger

Trigger finger is felt as stiffness, pain, catching and, ultimately, the locking of a finger or thumb into the palm. The locked finger



8 PEC STRETCH

Pectoral stretch: clasp your hands together behind your back. Keep the elbows straight and the trunk upright, and pull your arms up as far as you can, feeling the stretch in the front of the chest. Hold for 15 seconds, and repeat three times.



is generally seen first thing in the morning or after playing, and it can usually only be straightened out by pulling it back with the other hand. As the tendons pass down the fingers they run under bands that guide them, keeping them close to the bones. These tendons run in lubricated sheaths to prevent friction as they pass under the bands. With repetitive use, the sheath and/or tendon can become swollen and sometimes nodules may form. The tendons then get stuck as they glide under the bands when the fingers are bent, and can't pull back through. A snapping or popping sound is sometimes heard as the finger is straightened. Possible causes:

Technical:

- Repetitive bending of the fingers – often those in the fretting hand.

Physiological:

- More commonly seen in people with rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes.

Treatment:

- Night splinting to keep the affected fingers straight
- Taking anti-inflammatory medication.
- Steroid injections
- Exercises (prescribed by therapist)
- Review of technique/practice habits
- Surgery – if there is no response to the above measures, the band may be released and/or the nodule removed.

In it for the long haul

If you're serious about preventing injury and maximising your guitar playing life, consider your technique, your body and your instruments. Make playing safer by following these rules:

- When practising, take a five-minute break every 20 to 45 minutes
- Set up your guitar to make playing as close to effortless as possible (lowering the action, changing string gauge, etc)
- Distribute the guitar's weight across both shoulders with a dual shoulder strap such as a Slider strap
- Use a stand while practicing Arm'n'Track, Efel Rest, or ErgoPlay
- Reduce the effort required in holding a pick (you could try F-1 picks and mounts – see: www.f1pick.com)
- Use a peg winder to change strings
- Strengthen the hands with products like DigiFlex, Gripmaster and FingerWeights

These accessories are aimed at preventing injury, as well as rehabilitation. They may be available at your local guitar shop.

If you have a problem already, then you should be assessed by your treating practitioner about the suitability of these devices for you. At the first signs of injury or discomfort, make sure that you seek treatment immediately.

Meanwhile, don't forget to strengthen the shoulders and upper back with swimming, gym work, Pilates or specifically prescribed exercises from a therapist. Remember to include stretches in your warm up and cool down, and keep playing!

Marion Turner

Our guitar health columnist is a physiotherapist with many years of experience in the rehabilitation and prevention of injuries. Over this time she has developed a particular interest in upper limb conditions, and many of her patients are musicians. With post-graduate qualifications in physiotherapy (sports) and membership of the Australian Hand Therapy Association, she has lectured at the University of Adelaide on injury prevention in musicians.

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DRILLS FOR
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Dim & Aug Triads

By the end of this pack drill, there will be no triad on earth that can fox you...

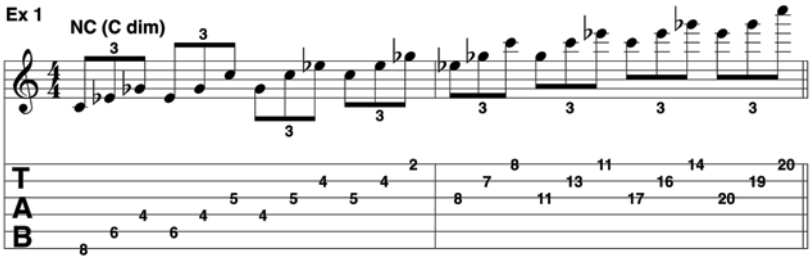
We've already studied the major triad and the minor triad. Now, this final dip into this all-important area involves the two remaining types – diminished and augmented. These types are encountered less often than the major and minor triads, but they still provide useful practice in visualising shapes both across and up the fretboard.

The formula for a diminished triad is root, flattened third, flattened fifth. Exercises 1 and 2 look at diminished triads in the key of C. Since the C major scale is C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, the notes that make up the C diminished triad will be C, Eb and Gb. The formula for an augmented triad is root, third and sharpened fifth. Exercises 3 and 4 deal with this and are also in the key of C, so the notes will be C, E and G#. This last note is called either the 'sharpened fifth' or 'the augmented fifth'.

1 DIMINISHED TRIADS PT. 1

4/4 TIME

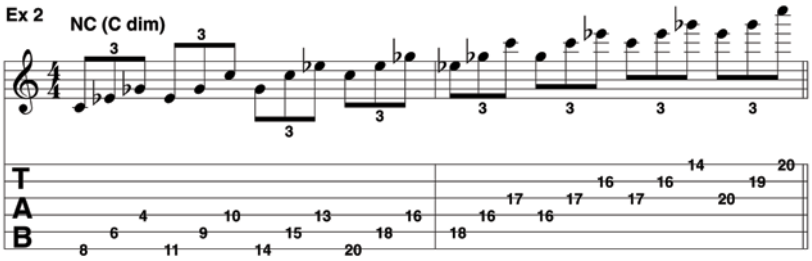
This exercise starts with a C diminished triad with the root on the bottom E and the other notes played on adjacent strings. This requires a bit of a stretch – the idea is to finger each of the notes that make up each triad at the same time, as shown in each triplet grouping. Since the root is at the bottom, this first triad is in 'root position'. Then the root is transposed up an octave, so now the flattened third is at the bottom, making a 'first inversion' triad. Next, the flattened third is transposed up an octave so the flattened fifth is at the bottom of the triad, giving a 'second inversion'. This is repeated across the neck until you run out of strings. Then it's time to move up the neck.



2 DIMINISHED TRIADS PT. 2

4/4 TIME

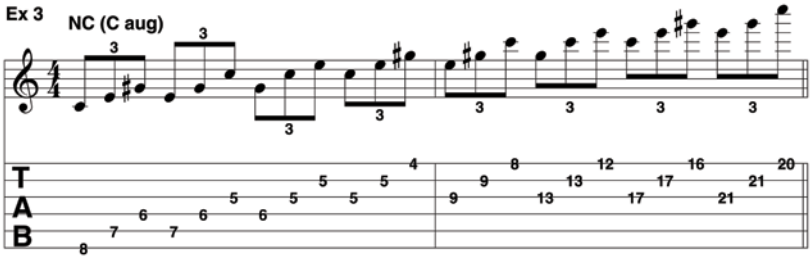
This time we're starting with the same root position C diminished triad as in Exercise 1, but instead of moving across the neck, we're going to move up the neck as far as possible, starting on the bottom three strings, then moving to the next three, and so forth. Simply put, when you finally run out of frets, it's time to move across the fretboard.



3 AUGMENTED TRIADS PT. 1

4/4 TIME

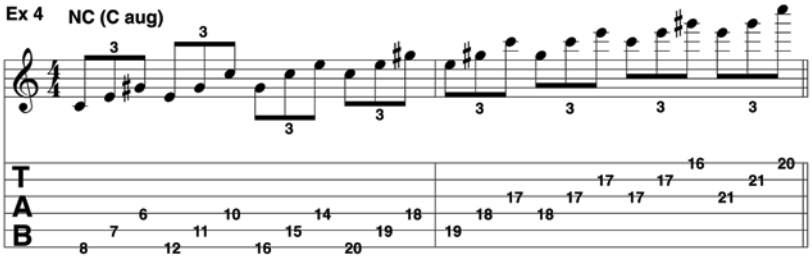
This starts with a C augmented triad with the root on the bottom E, then the lowest note is transposed an octave higher, as in Ex 1. Once you run out of frets on the last beat of bar 1, start moving up the fretboard. Notice how the chord shape remains the same as you move up the fretboard; this is because the distance between each note in an augmented triad is a major third (four frets' worth), and the distance between, for example, the sharpened or augmented fifth in a root-position augmented triad to the root transposed an octave higher is also a major third. As a result, the augmented triad has the effect of splitting the octave into equal portions, as it were.



4 AUGMENTED TRIADS PT. 2

4/4 TIME

You've got the gist of the whole idea by now; starting with the same root position C augmented triad as shown in Exercise 3, we move up the fretboard on the bottom string strings until we run out of frets, then start moving across the fretboard. Notice, once again, how when moving up the fretboard, the finger shape remains the same.



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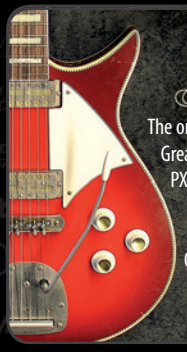

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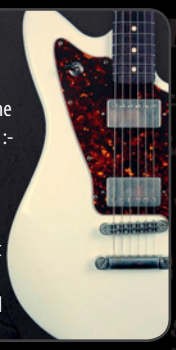

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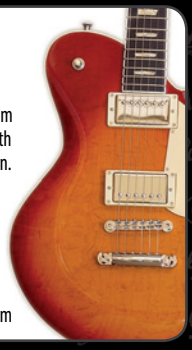

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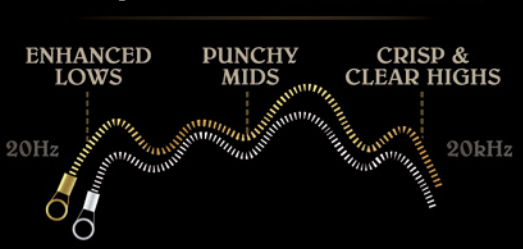

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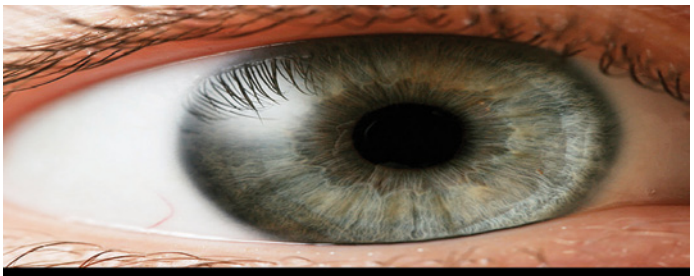

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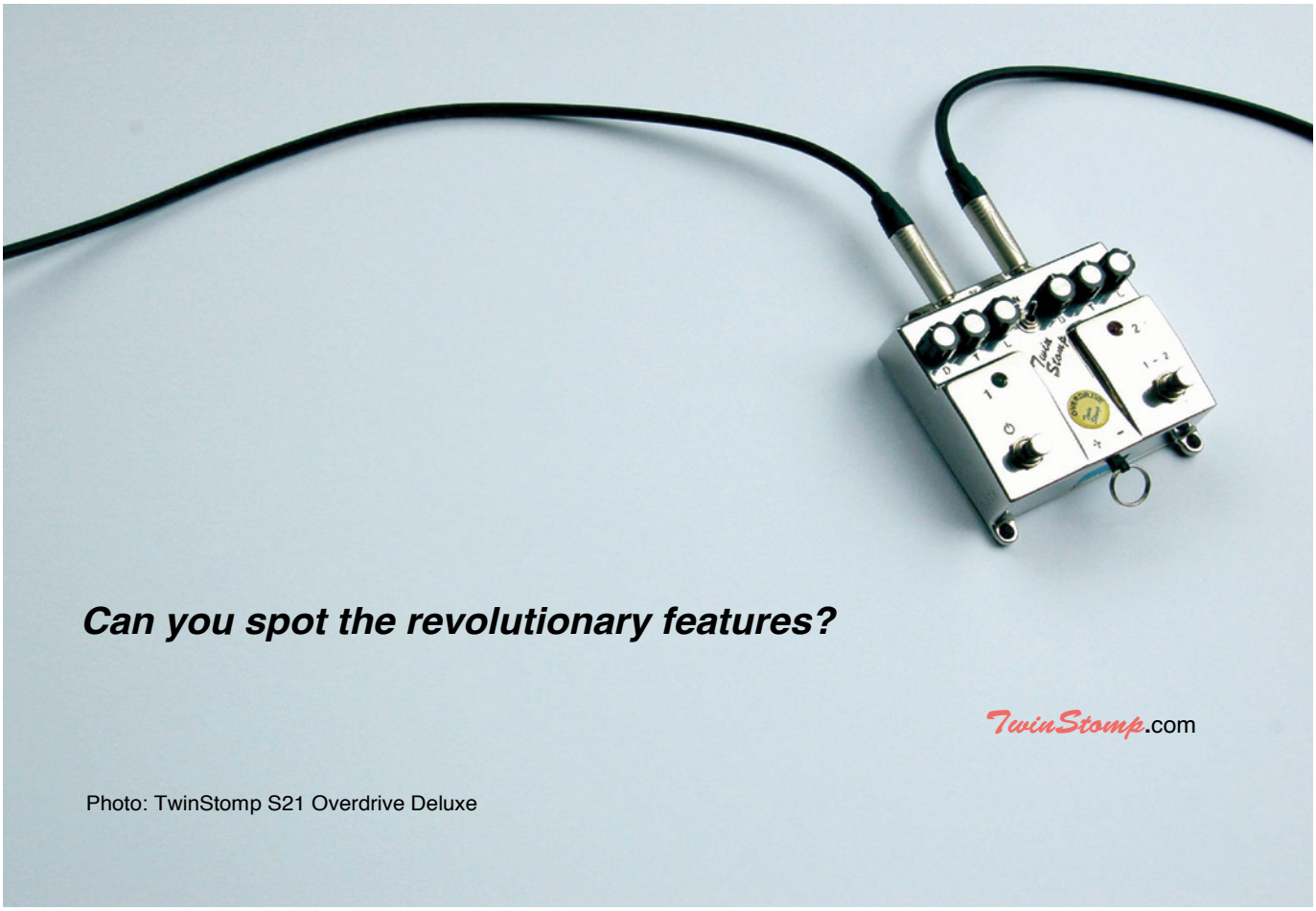

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Soundtrack of my life

Robert Cray

From hot ’50s and ’60s blues to classic Memphis soul and the blues-rock explosion, the Georgia-born guitarist wears his influences on his sleeve

Photo: Jeff Katz

Robert Cray has long been the king of silky, soulful, tasteful blues, from his 1986 *Strong Persuader* album onwards. His latest project *In My Soul* takes things a step further; it includes both the first cover versions to find their way onto a Cray album and a clutch of new tunes that beautifully invoke the Stax and Chess soul recordings that inspired him as a radio-transfixed kid. Otis Redding’s *Nobody’s Fault But Mine,* Lou Rawls’ *Your Good Thing (Is About To End)* and Bobby Bland’s *Deep In My Soul* all get the Cray treatment; the results are stunning, while the Cray and Richard Cousins-penned *Hip Tight Onions* is a clear and seriously swinging homage to Booker T & The MG’s. During Cray’s career he’s received 15 Grammy nominations, no less than five Grammy awards and has sold over 12 million records. *In My Soul* suggests there may be a few more in the tank yet...

Introducing The Beatles

THE BEATLES

It was all the excitement about the Beatles and that performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* that first got me inspired to play the guitar. It took a while to convince my parents... they finally got me a plastic thing with nylon strings. It wasn’t gonna cut it, so they then found me a beautiful Harmony Sovereign acoustic.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

Strangely, the first time I heard *Purple Haze* was during an assembly in school. This band came out with Marshall amps, started playing, and those dissonant intro notes were the weirdest thing I’d ever heard. The brother of the guitarist was in my class so I asked him who it was. He said ‘it’s Jimi Hendrix’.

Disraeli Gears

CREAM

I joined a record club to get the Hendrix album, and this was the next one I got. I stayed a fan of Eric’s throughout. We played *Sunshine Of Your Love* in some of the first bands I was in. I was 13 years old and we did two gigs in a go-go bar. All of us were underage. They had women dancing in the cages!

Buddy Guy

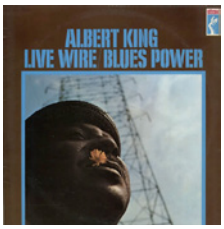
A MAN IN THE BLUES

We moved from Virginia to Washington State and I met up with a couple of guys in high school who were listening to the blues, and this was one of the records we were nuts about – my introduction to blues, really. It has *Mary Had A Little Lamb* on there – the one that Stevie Ray covered. We were 15 or 16 years old.

Albert King

LIVE WIRE BLUES POWER

This was recorded in San Francisco. It’s so loud and it’s live and it’s just, like wow! We loved the track *Blues Power* particularly. I was still just kinda holed up with my guitar-playing friends discovering the blues. We bought everything that we could find; the blues records were cheap. We only paid $2 or $3 dollars apiece.



Elmore James

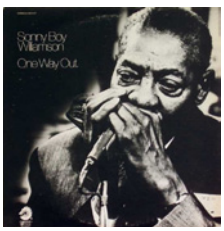
THE BLUES IN MY HEART THE RHYTHM IN MY SOUL

I now have three copies of this record. I can’t help but buy it whenever I run across it. Elmore James had probably the saddest voice in electric blues. I don’t profess to play slide, but I listened and absorbed. I love Elmore James’ playing. There’s some regular guitar on here too, which is cool... the other side of Elmore.

Sonny Boy Williamson II

ONE WAY OUT

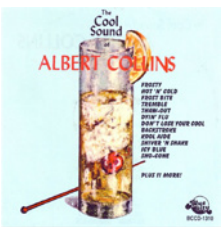
We stumbled over many records, but this was another favourite. Sonny Boy Williamson often had Robert Lockwood Jr playing guitar on his records, and his playing – the way he chorded – was just beautifully melodic... kinda jazzy in a blues style. We loved Sonny Boy’s infamous *Little Village* too.



Albert Collins

THE COOL SOUND OF ALBERT COLLINS

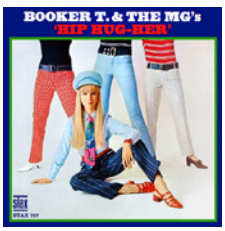
We used to emulate Albert even in our first blues band. He’d play around the area and he actually did our high school graduation party in 1971. I got a chance to thank him and he said ‘Young man, you play guitar? Well, keep it up!’ Around 1976 we would back him when he played locally for 18 months or so. He was a great guy.



Booker T & The MG’s

HIP HUG-HER

Basically our band is set-up like the MG’s. As a quartet, that’s the band that everybody should be trying to emulate. It’s a band that plays its parts well together. I think we got very lucky being fans of people like Booker T and Albert Collins... we picked the right track to follow. That stuff is still strong to this day.



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